

OUAINT IRISH BYGONES.

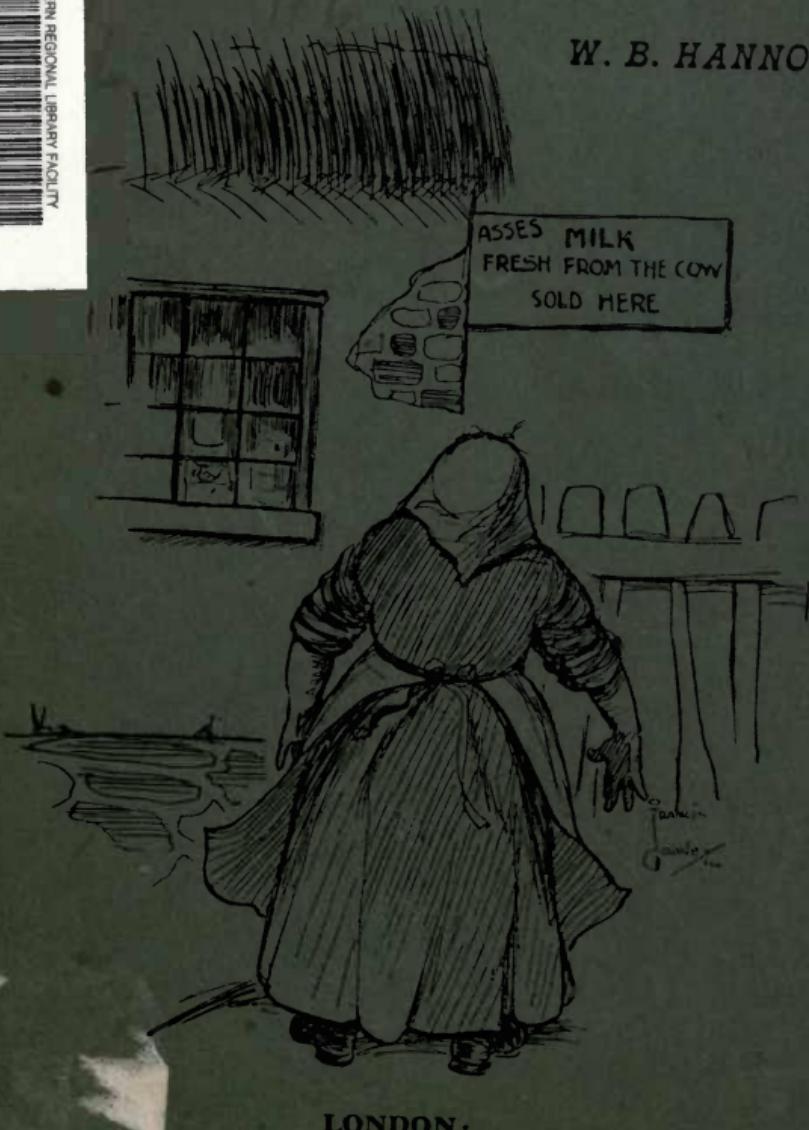
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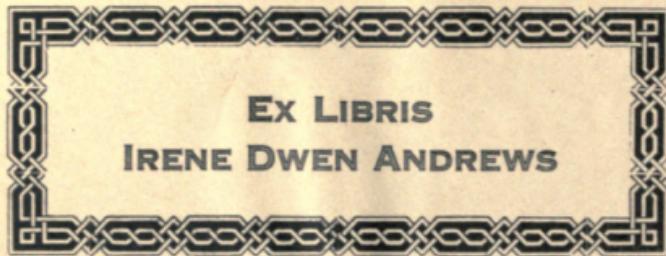
W. B. HANNON



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QUAINT IRISH BYGONES.

BY
W. B. HANNON.

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by
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DEDICATED
TO
“THE TRUE FRIENDS AT CUIL GREANA.”

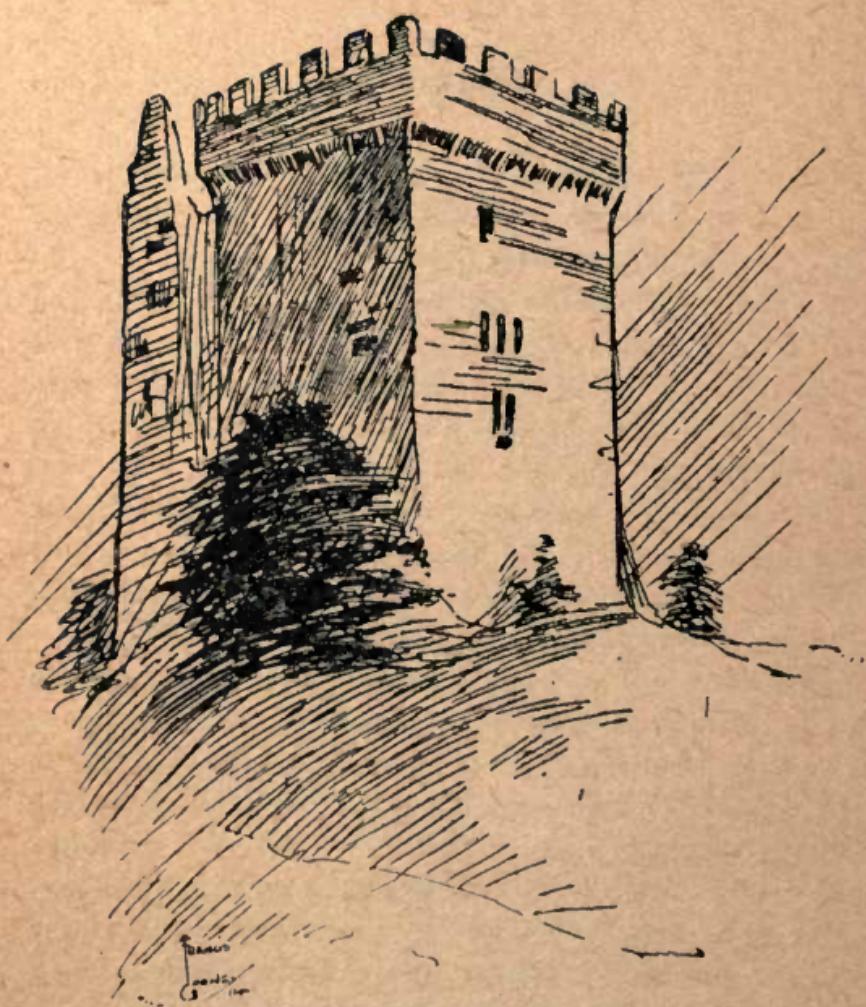
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A FOREWORD.

OLD bygone scenes and personages are usually of interest in this age of excitement and novelty, when there is a hankering after quiet and simplicity.

In the simple circles depicted in this little book, the reader will find comedy mixed with the drama and tragedy of life : still the humble folks played their part on the brief stage of life, and the curtain of Eternity rang them into another and happier sphere.

Outside politics they knew none of the great problems exciting the world, and the upas-shadows of doubt, discontent, and smouldering despair that threaten in our day to sweep aside our boasted "Car of Progress." Many who scoff at such humble scenes forget all the social ulcers so protrusive in their own time and country. The limited horizon of the depicted peasantry was spared the evil of Sin's high noon, even if poverty and ignorance stalked in their path. After all, what does Eternity know of States who to promote their welfare, sacrificed their souls and bodies and in their scepticism see the Creator nowhere. Better the simplicity where man saw the Deity in all His works, heard His laughter in the ripple of the stream, His voice in the thunderstorm, and saw His anger in the writhen bolt.



THE OLD BURG.

Quaint Irish Bygones.

AN OLD BURGH.

THE history of the old City, or, as it was fondly termed, Our Town, is no less eventful than some of the most prominent in the land. What a theme for the antiquarian, poet, or novelist ! It took its name from the azure river flowing by its walls. There is hardly any satisfactory account as to its foundation, but it goes back so remote that as Macaulay says of another ancient Institution, "It is lost in the twilight of fable." We remember a venerable historian of it in our youth, a faded time-worn Journalist of the old school, one that a reader of history could easily imagine was alive in the days of Froissart of the celebrated chronicles. He gleaned his now obscure history from antiquarian observations, and the surmises of an active brain in an enfeebled body, and made it quite an idyll, but it was not the history of the grim old town. It is a modest City when viewed by modern statistics but noble in ancient prowess. Many venerable buildings yet remain in languishing decay, and in its flickering and fitful life there, the old pre-Reformation Cathedral dates far back to the time when the town was an emporium of silks, laces and general merchandise. Its sweet voiced bells fling out each evening the chimes which go back many centuries in the history of

the grim and gray old Burgh. Vague local tradition bestows on the church and its surroundings so much that modern research stops short in its efforts to distinguish the hoary legend from historical accuracy. The facade of the local Exchange indicates that this home of mercantile transactions was once second to none in the Kingdom, that is before the advent of the legalised dealings now transacted in Stock Exchanges, saw the light for many centuries. The remnant of this building in our early days was a mendicity office, so low has the old town fallen ! The simple graceful features of the building strike an extreme note with its present surroundings. Neglected and dilapidated streets abound in that historic quarter where the wines of old Spain once found their way, and precious brocades were sold for rich citizens' wives when Alfred the Great was sitting idly at the fire of his hostess and the cake was gaily burning. Penury and squalor flaunt in the region where Kings held high revel and Parliaments older than that of Westminster were crowded by the Lords and Commons of a tribal Kingdom. In some of the old lane-ways one sees quaint doors and windows redolent of far away times and the houses are in possession of poor people perfectly oblivious of the great personages who once inhabited them. If the dead could come back to the scenes of their former glory and struggles, what a strange company would noiselessly flit about the old streets and houses ! No wonder that the people believe in ghosts and fairies and have the supernatural ever present, good and ill are portends of superstition in that ancient place. Not far away is the golden tide that conveyed ships of forgotten pattern on its bosom to and from foreign countries, the galleons of Spain and the

clumsy but picturesque beak pointed wooden vessels of other continental countries lay side by side in its wharves carrying the produce of their country or taking the handicrafts of the brawny natives of the port, the old quays are now as quiet as a cemetery and as forlorn looking as the Coliseum, except for a stray tramp steamer carrying imported goods when the citizens are compelled to fly to other countries for want of trade on the very articles that are sent from abroad. I may be put down as a pessimist for such a lurid picture, but it is well to remember that optimism is frequently the result of ignorance, and I am not a stranger to the world I am discussing. This is a digression from my subject, and to return to the old port I may say that it had a glorious past, when brave men set sail from its old land locked quays for the battlefields of France and Spain, with the "Wild Geese" who went to continental armies after the battle of the Boyne, or later on, for those of the Peninsula under Wellington or Bonaparte. Hope is Fancy's child often enshrined in the sanctum of the human heart, and it finds a place still in the old town that it aims to rejuvenate. Our port nowadays never beholds a greater activity than the unloading of a herring smack or the brawling of tipsy and lazy fishermen who rest on their oars looking vacantly over the mossy battlements into the flowing tide. They are waiting no doubt for a fairy godmother to come out of its waves like a mermaid to bring them unearned gold; forgetful that it is by honest labour and earnest endeavour that a people can become great and prosperous by which the desolate and ruined place will spring phoenix-like out of its ashes. The majesty of officialdom is represented by an old man called the Harbour

Master, who sits in a little office representing the empty exchequer of the Port Commissioners. This pompous body is composed of hucksters or small dealers, such as the chandler, clothes dealer, coal retailer, and flour importer, with some others who prefer to sit on stilts so as to appear above vulgar pretensions. The last lingering shadow of commerce deserted when rival politicians made the deliberations of the meetings a camping ground for personal invective and squalid bickerings. The village Hampdens talk turgid, and swell with their own vain glory like a young turkey with his first tail feathers. Many ruined mills are seen here and there through the locality like giant spectres in their tottering decay, meet homes for the nests of the martin and jackdaw. The policy of Cobden and Bright with its ever open door for the cheap flour of the foreigner crushed their competition out; one word, and we may bring the introduction to an end, it is merely to point out that the ancient Municipality is not quite sunk in the Serbonian marsh of deep despair and that the last lingering shadow of its past greatness has not departed. Its education is not entirely culled from School Board trimmings, and the young men do not mistake insolence for independence and swagger for good breeding in an atmosphere often having a standard inconveniently high for the rhapsodies of poets and writers. Passing over the embattled bridge leading to the town, we behold the first landmark.

AN OLD FEUDAL STRONGHOLD.

THE local Castle is a distinguishing ornament to the vicinity, and must have been in ancient times an im-

pregnable fortress. It is situated on the south side of the river on an elevation that gives great dignity to its appearance. Its walls and towers form a noble flanking to the principal part of the structure. From the observations of old historians it seems pretty evident that it owes its origin to King John, although much of the Castle building is now wanting. The zig-zag fret-work round the arch that leads into the inner court is evidently of a different style of architecture.

From the lapse of time and the shocks it sustained in ancient wars, a great portion of it became quite a ruin, but it was repaired with consummate taste and judgment, so that it deserves to be considered one of the noblest baronial castles. Each of the gates are in highly embattled towers furnished with a portcullis.

The gloomy underground dungeons must have been noisome abodes for the unfortunate ones confined in them for many centuries. The savage ferocity of the feudal ages is gone, and the captives no longer fill its miserable dungeons. The old stronghold that witnessed stirring times for long ages is now as peaceful looking in its decay as the old city that nestles at its feet.

You look in vain for any marks of its former grandeur, for trophies won by its different occupants, who were eminent in our annals for military prowess and deeds of chivalry. Its naked halls are devoid of helms and hauberks or the spoils of the chase. Instead of the venerable porter who welcomed the numerous trains of lords and ladies, there is a conductor who is eager to receive the fees for admittance. The distant noise of traffic serves to accentuate the quiet of an erstwhile babel of sound.

The old city and castle underwent various fortunes

in their day, and sided with kings and usurpers, with Cromwell and James II. One of the most memorable of their sieges was that between William of Orange and the last of the Stuarts. The ancient building had its hours of delicious triumph and its bitter reverses ; foreign mercenaries and rebellious barons at one time or other sallied forth from its portals to liberate or enslave. If its old walls could speak, what a history they would recount, but they are now the mute memorial of by-gone times !

From the flag tower of the castle the beholder can see the pleasantly diversified hills and dales around the old town, with their peculiar richness and picturesque beauty. From this point can be seen the lordly river flowing through a varied course, gliding smoothly past the town. To the north is seen the hills shaded with woods and heath clad. On the south the vales unite the beauties of cultivated fields and a diversity of landscape. Rising hills and blending vales are seen towards the east and west, which unfold the most vivid tints of nature.

How many generations looked on this scene and heard the murmur of the near-by cascade ? One is loth to leave this delightful eminence, where the mind and eye feast on beauty and antiquity.

OLD RURAL SCENES.

BEFORE we enter the town it is well to take a glance at its surroundings.

We loved the old footpaths, and those rustic and picturesque stiles, opening their pleasant escapes from frequented places and dusty highways, into the

solitudes of nature. It was delightful to catch a glimpse of one under the old elder-tree by some ancient cottage, or half hidden by the overhanging boughs of a wood. It was pleasing to see the smooth dry track, winding away in easy curves, along some green slope to the churchyard, to the embosomed cottage, or to the rural grange. It was an object of certain inspiration. It seemed to invite one from noise and publicity, into the heart of solitude and of rural delights. It beckoned the imagination on, through green and whispering cornfields, through short but verdant pasture; the flowery mowing-grass; the odorous and sunny hayfield; the festivity of harvest; from farm to farm; from village to village; by clear and mossy wells; by tinkling brooks, and deep wood-skirted streams; to crofts, where the daffodil rejoiced in spring, or meadows, where the large, blue geranium embellished the wayside; to heaths, with their warm, elastic sward and crimson bells, the clithering of grasshoppers, the foxglove, and the old gnarled oak; in short, to all the solitary haunts, after which the city-pent lover of nature pants, as "hart panteth after the water-brooks."

What was so linked with our rural tastes, our sweetest memories, and our beloved poetry, as stiles and field-paths? Goldsmith and Thomson, have adorned them with some of their richest wreaths. They have consecrated them to poetry. It was along the footpath in secluded fields,—upon the stile in the embowered lane,—where the wild-rose and the honey-suckle were lavishing their beauty and their fragrance, that we delighted to picture to ourselves rural swains breathing in the dewy sweetness of a summer evening their vows of love. It was there that we gazed upon the gorgeous sunset,—

the evening star following with silvery lamp the fading day, or the moon showering her pale lustre through the balmy night air, with a fancy that kindled and soared into the heavens before us,—there, that we have all felt the charm of woods and green fields, and solitary boughs waving in the golden sunshine, or darkening in the melancholy beauty of evening shadows. Who has not thought how beautiful was the sight of a village congregation pouring out from their old church on a summer day, and streaming off through the quiet meadows, in all directions, to their homes ? Or who, that has visited Alpine scenery, has not beheld with a poetic feeling, the mountaineers come winding down out of their romantic seclusions on a sabbath morning, pacing the solitary heath-tracks, bounding with elastic step down the fern-clad dells, or along the course of a riotous stream.

All around the city is a country particularly rich in the romance of history, and beloved by admirers of pastoral beauty.

Such is the atmosphere of the surroundings of the quiet old town whose former history of prowess is scarcely more than a memory.

Whatever may be the noisy exterior of the age in which we live there is a real quiet fount of life to be found in such a place. The remains of old battered walls, the moss covered slates, the dripping trees, the birds singing, glad even in uncommercial surroundings, and with simple people all suggest calm and contemplation.

“ Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid

Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire,
Hands that the rod of empires might have swayed
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.”

THE OLD MARKET.

As we enter the town, we pass over a massive old bridge and come to an ancient and time-worn market.

This venerable place was one of the most curious bazaars to be found. On one side second-hand clothes were for sale, and all the misfits of the Empire seemed to find their way there. If a customer went to one stall he was suddenly pulled by a rival dealer, so bashful people found it trying to go to the Market House as it was called. It had an air and smell of the tenth century about it, and the purchases made there seemed to be known all through the town and country. On the other side there were small butchers' stalls with very inferior meat exposed for sale. It could truly be called Lamb and Bullock that had died a lingering death. The modern laws of hygiene were not observed, but still its consumers seemed to thrive on it. In the centre of the Market was a reservation for dealers of skimmed and fresh milk, and it was there the tugs of war were in operation. Several old and pugnacious women retailed the milk, and it was the practice of a housekeeper to taste some of the fluid before buying. There was one sturdy old lady, and when once her milk was tasted woe to the person who did not buy it. The selling of vegetables was a monopoly in one family for ages, and no one would think to intrude on the favoured persons. Outside the market were donkeys for hire or sale so that between the shouting inside and the braying outside it beggared description.

SOME LOCAL LANDMARKS.

SOME of the ancient houses of the town as already mentioned, were once inhabited by merchants once well known in the annals of commerce. Having fallen upon evil days town residences had their ponderous door and windows removed and flimsy facades to suit trade took their honoured place.

Every petty shopkeeper nowadays has his wares exposed in them, and the locality has drifted into slumdom or shabby gentility.

In one a painted show-board, at the window of a miserable garret, declares it to be "The Office of the Peruvian Guano Company." On the casement of the first floor, in the same hereditament of poverty, is a bill of "Eligant rooms to let." Ladies' tresses in the shop-window illustrate the punning announcement above it : "Nature improved by Rickets," which was the name of the proprietor, among the advertisements, a capital barber, stands at the door, and points to a ragged inscription depending from the parti-coloured pole of his art, from whence we learn that "Nobody is to be s()aved during di()ine service." He enforces attention to this fact on an unshaved itinerant. This fellow has a pole in his right hand, for "The Preservation of Public Morals," and a puppet of Punch and Judy lolling from his left coat pocket. An apple stall is taken care of by a fat fellow with a screaming child, whose goods appear to be coveted by two little beings untutored in the management of the eye. We gather from the "Local Reporter" that on the ground floor the fruit woman is Sarah Frost, and that she

and Rickets, the former for selling goods, and the latter for shaving on the Sunday, "were convicted and fined ten shillings each." Next to the barber's is the "Star Eating-house," with "Ladies' School" on the first floor casement, and "Mangleing took in." At the angle of the penthouse roofs of these dwellings "an angel's head in stone with pigeon's wings" deceives a hungry cat into an attempt to commit an assault upon it from the attic window. Opposite the cook's door an able-bodied waggoner, with a pennon from his whip, inscribed "Knowledge is Power," obscures part of another whereon all that remains is "nick's institution."

A "stealed butcher," his left hand resting at ease within his apron, cleaver hung, and carelessly capped, with a countenance indicating no other spirit than that of the still, and no disposition to study deeper than the bottom of a porter pot, a well fed urchin, his son, hangs by his father's sleeve, and drags along a wheeled toy, a lamb,—emblem of many a future "lamb his riot dooms to bleed." A knowing little boy, relieves the standard-bearer of the "School for Adults," from the weight of his pocket handkerchief, and his banner hides the letter "d" on another borne by a person of uneven temper in canonicals, and hence for "The Church in danger," we read "The Church in anger." Close at the heels of the latter is an object almost as miserable, as the exceedingly miserable figure in the frontispiece to the "Miseries of Human Life." This rearward supporter of "The Church in danger," alias in "anger," is a poor, undersized, famine-worn, badged boy, with a hat abundantly too large for its contents, and a coat to his heels, and in another person's shoes, a world too wide for his own feet.

At a public house, "The Angel and Punch Bowl,"—T. Moore—the "United Sons of Freedom" hold wassail; their flag is hung at one of the windows, from whence some panes are absent, and they are fighting at the door, and heartily cheered by the standard bearer of "No Pugilism." A ferocious looking fellow is depicted riding on a half blind horse, who makes cruel cuts with his whip on the back of a youth who is trying to get up behind him.

We are now at a corner establishment, denominated "Prospect House, for Young Ladies," by the Misses Gray. The corner opposite is "Emerald House Academy for Young Gentlemen," by Dr. Alex. Sand." Prospect House has an "Assurance" policy, and from one of its windows one of the "young ladies" drops a work by "H. Moore"—in eager regard to one of the "young gentlemen" from Emerald House, who addresses her from his room. This Romeoing is rendered more scenical by a tree, whereon hangs a lost kite, papered with a "Prospectus" of Emerald House, from whence it appears that pupils bringing a "knife and fork" and paying "Twenty Guineas per annum," are entitled to "Universal Erudition," and the utmost attention to their Morals and Principles.

Such is the nondescript old town, with its medley of the gay and ridiculous.

ONE OF THE FORMER GLORIES.

IN the tower of one of the local churches which dates back before the Reformation are still the sweet bells that gladdened the ears of many generations with their silvery melody.

"Hark! the faint bells of the sunken city
Peal once more their wonted evening chimes."

The old Minster is near the river, and the music of the bells steals over the gurgling water with their soft cadence, bringing peace in their soothing sound.

There is a pathetic story connected with those ancient bells which bears repetition. It appears that they were originally in some Italian town being cast for the church there in far-off days. During one of the many upheavals of society in Italy they were carried away from the despoiled church and the maker of them searched in vain for his beloved bells in after years, as they were his cherished handicraft. He wandered from town to town in Continental Europe and nowhere could he find rest. The old story or legend says that he at last reached our city, and as he entered the harbour he heard his own sweet bells chime out on the evening air, and died rather suddenly from joy at the prospect of recovering them.

THE LOCAL HOSPITAL.

In the wide cheery wards of the Infirmary were reposing either temporarily or for the rest of their drab existence the flotsam and the jetsam of the "Old Burg." It was a study in human nature to visit this school of human infirmities, and dwell on the comicalities of most of the afflicted patients. On a bed inside the door, with a good perspective, so that very few incidents escaped her view, lay an elderly woman suffering from a broken limb, but otherwise very much alive. When any friendly visitor entered she shed copious and easily conjured tears, and as she was so pitiable looking, she



THE HOSPITAL WARD.

won the kind samaritan's attention. The wonder of the spontaneous grief ceased after I paid a few visits, and I found that the uncontrollable weeping could as suddenly vanish as drops of rain in a parched soil. The tear and the smile were congenial to her Celtic fancy.

She became quite confidential, and she found me naturally sympathetic, then she was desirous of impressing on me that she was not of the common herd. She sat up in the bed, rolled her eyes and gesticulated at the other patients who were more or less overawed at her dignity, as she had once been a lady's maid in a great house.

The laughter or tears would give way to fine scenes of scorn and irony when she cried out so that the nurses and inattentive patients could hear her, "Oh, the misery to think that I am in the hospital, I, who was once maid to Lady C——, and who married my poor John from the Abbey, where he was gardener to Lady S——." Her eyes then rolled like a marionette and she proudly looked at the awe-stricken sufferers and then at her visitor to know what were the effects. It was a rich comedy to view the airs which she displayed and how she cowed down sneers and opposition where invective was a fine art.

She had a large old-fashioned prayer-book given her some forty years before by her mistress with her name in it, and this did gallant duty to hush any reproach levelled at her, she raised it aloft, and fierce and torrential words proclaimed her respectability and worth, had not Lady C—— given her that very Prayer Book ? In her fits of gloom I dared to point out how happy and contented some of her countrywomen were who were at

the other end of the ward, at this daring pronouncement she forgot in her righteous anger her afflicted member, and almost jumped out of the bed at the comparison, and pointed her finger at them in fine scorn. She a former maid in K—— House, and they mere scullions who should not ape their betters. Another old lady near by was continually laughing at her rare good luck in having such a clean snug bed after her years of hunger and turmoil in the city. She was a picture of happiness within the gloomy portals of the hospital ward. Old Mrs. G——, who passed the good age of four score and ten, had her hair decked out with gaudy ribbons to her heart's content. Querulous old Mrs. M—— usually occupied the large arm-chair in the recreation room, and found fault with every person and thing within reach.

A gentle old soul usually sat at a little harmonium and played Scotch airs with an assortment of Revivalist hymns, which helped to allay the bickerings of the discontented.

The most pleasing personality in the men's ward was an elderly and very afflicted man who was literally bent in all his members with acute muscular rheumatism. He had not moved out of the same position unless when taken out of the bed, for some years, yet had a sunny disposition despite his ever present pains.

Some of the chronic cases were hardened politicians, and eagerly awaited political and social literature, and even kept themselves in touch with the latest developments of the Stock Exchange. Some old fellows lived in hopes that some long lost relatives would remember them in their testaments. They had neglected their opportunities, and looked to some fortunate

chance to recoup their lost fortunes, and so the world went on within this domain of the home of failures and misfits. A thrill of not ungenerous ambition kept them in the fool's paradise belonging to youth.

THE GREAT MAN OF THE PARISH.

In our old-fashioned town hero worship was in a congenial atmosphere. We had many ideals of the great and good in our circumscribed sphere. The professional agitator was the darling of the shiftless and discontented element in our politics-ridden county, the old nobility were the subject of reverence for mature and discerning minds, although it must be said that this Conservative element was reckoned a "lost cause," but all rallied together and paid tribute at the shrine of the parish shepherd.

The pastor was a very human saint, full of the milk of kindness and charity, and like the "Abu Ben Adhem," of Leigh Hunt, he worshipped the Creator by loving his fellow men. He was not like the average of his confrères sent to a seminary at a very tender age, and precluded from knowing the world until he was launched on it as an inexperienced young man who thought that he knew all when he studied the class books of philosophy and theology out of the Seminary armoury. He was cast among men of flesh and blood early in life, at business, and knew the struggles, temptations, sorrows and joys of life in the best of schools,—that of experience. He was like the valiant "Apostles of the Gentiles," all things to all men, and he fulfilled Newman's definitions of a gentleman, for he was gentle towards the bashful, tender towards the distant, and

merciful to the absurd. "His pity gave ere charity began," as could be said of the village clergyman of Lissoy. He chid the faults of the vagrant and beggar, but gave aid at the same time. He invented means to give to the sensitive poor, and gave often and gave out of proportions to his income. He could be merry with the child, entertaining with the jovial, serious with those in trouble, and consoling as a woman with the sick. He was the darling of the old, especially the old dames from whom he received more information and gossip than any others of his brethren, who would not descend to hear the whims and fancies of the old hearts hungering for sympathy.

Still he could present a bold front when the occasion required, and fulfilled his ministry in the highest aims, but had a wonderful and forbearing pity and patience with sinners. Thus ennobling his calling, making it radiate the picture of the "Good Shepherd" to a world that sees too little of it in the lives of those who preach mercy and pity.

I have seen him as considerate to a drunken harlot, as another would be to a benefactor. He was often laughed at for the pains that he displayed in a case of human sorrow. How often was he late for his meals to the annoyance of the cook, and the disgust of his brethren? He had been in lanes and dens doing his level best in the Master's Sacred Cause. He scarcely ever showed annoyance but would see the ridiculous and absurd where others would stamp and fume with anger. After all his years he had little or nothing laid aside, but Providence seemed to give him as much as the covetous in the end of his days. He was a practical student but not a faddist, and he avoided politics in



THE PARISH SHEPHERD.

word and deed. He was witty with an inoffensive kind of humour, and had a decided contempt for prigs and humbugs.

Although getting along well in years he was more youthful than the latest self conscious assistant. He is still in the land of the living in a retired hamlet away from the parish, where he was so long an eye to the blind and a hand and leg to the decrepit, and a true cheery mariner to others on the tempestuous waves of the world. He incarnates the vicar described by Chaucer :—

“ He was also a learned man, a clerk,
Benign he was and wonder diligent,
And in adversitie full patient.”

RECOLLECTIONS IN THE BARONY.

THE Church of England clergyman was a scholarly gentleman of unaffected mien, and well-known as a poet of no mean ability and a contributor to Contemporary Reviews. He was like the parson described by Goldsmith, “ passing rich at forty pounds a year.” His church was well attended in my childhood but changes and immigration depopulated the parish of its flock. He had to be content with a congregation of his own family, the verger and wife, and a few soldiers, and an old deaf resident who was the last of her line, and the only remaining sheep of his flock.

The church is a pretty and interesting one, and contains memorials of many good families once worshippers within its walls. It merits more than a hurried inspection and was restored in recent times to the coldness and correctness of modern requirements. In the sur-

rounding churchyard the tomb of greatest interest is that over the grave of the first Mayor of the town. He was selected in a curious way. The burgesses centuries ago had not the methodical and easy methods of election that we now possess, so a dispute arose, over rival candidates, and they could not make up their mind who was to be Mayor. Finally someone hit on the strange expedient that whoever should pass first over the bridge leading to the town should be elected "Father of the City." The electors took their stand one morning for the purpose, and who should come along but a man with a bundle of heather on his shoulder that was then used for making brooms. Here they found their Mayor, "Jack of the brooms." He was installed in honour, and decently dressed, and how he got through his year of office is not recorded. His real name was Adam Sargent, so he has given notoriety to the sequestered God's acre in death.

In the palmy days of the now deserted church, there was a sexton named Jim attached to it.. He was a chorister also, and to mollify his throat for the strain of singing he was accustomed to take more than a moderate share of liquor. On one occasion he was under its influence more or less and instead of singing the given hymn he startled the congregation by singing in a rollicking voice the old-fashioned song, "Lovely Molly." His wife was named Molly, and he was wont to banter her by the song that came uppermost in his mind at the time.

He had passed away before my remembrance, but I well recollect the "lovely Molly" of Jim. She was a decrepit old woman at that time, but bore the marks of former good looks.

The parson of that period was one of the old sporting type now extinct. Nevertheless he was a good warm-hearted friend to the poor and a kind neighbour to persons of every creed.

Near by is seen many of the most stirring battle places of the Revolution of 1690, when William of Orange unseated the not over brave King James II. The ramparts there were vigorously and obstinately defended by the stout hearts of the citizens. All the old gabled Elizabethan houses of former years have disappeared, and save the solid stone houses in the square in front of the church cheap and mean dwellings have replaced them.

The old town has a more ancient charter than any town in the Kingdom, except London, but it has shrunk from importance as in the olden times to be a modern Cinderella.

Some years ago the old Burg had a well-known poet of some pretensions. He was like the majority of his fraternity, but endeared himself despite all his shortcomings to the citizens. He issued a volume of poetry descriptive of the surrounding pastoral scenery and the historical past of his native place, but added many biting satires on local personages. This stroke of policy brought him benefactors from all sides, as they were afraid of being placed in the pillory of his poetic derision and held up to the ridicule of their neighbours. He received a sinecure from the municipal body and that saved them from getting their deserts. His sayings and doings were the chief topics of conversation for years, and his poetic effusions will ever be read with relish and interest by natives of the old place at home and abroad. Even in his old age the Bard could be said to stir medicinal waters.

THE LOCAL CONSTABLE.

THIS official was the pride of the more staid members of the locality, but the terror of evil-doers, and also of those who neglected their beasts of burden and cattle. He spent a fair share of his time working up cases for the Petty Sessions against farmers and others who allowed their cows, horses, or pigs to roam abroad on their neighbour's pasturage or on the common highways.

He swooped down on the stray animals, and placed them in the pound or local pen for such wanderers, and mulcted the owners at the Sessions. Poachers, beggars, and tramps stood in awe of this minion of the law, and children fairly shook with terror if he came upon them playing on the highways.

The station or barrack was in a very prominent position, so that the keen eyes of the guardian of the law had a good vantage ground to see how things went on. He seemed a village Providence, so ubiquitous was he when anything went amiss.

The house was a two-storied white-washed cottage, with a well kept garden at the back. The lozenge shaped windows were filled with geraniums and other seasonable flowers. Wallflowers and ivy trailed up the sides of the neat little home, and when not chasing pigs, cows, dogs and wayward people, the constable found his chief occupation in tending his beloved flowers.

The Coat of Arms of the lion and unicorn over the doorway gave the little residence an official aspect, and enhanced its importance in the eyes of all law abiding people. He had his enemies of course, for who could be

so solicitous for law and order and not have the ire of offenders.

Had he not seized a donkey belonging to the Chairman of the local Council, and a pig belonging to the Chairman of the Patriotic Party ? His prying eyes discovered some wounds on the back of an ill-used farm horse, the property of a local magistrate, and all this before the Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals came into existence.

He arrested the local shoemaker, a man of political and social importance, for intoxication, and alienated the good feelings of the baker by getting him fined for using light or fraudulent weights.

So feeling was worked up in the district by interested parties, and public sympathy was ranged on the side of the delinquents, and the Constable and his lady were wounded by the coolness of their friends. Who can describe the joy of the worthy pair when they received an invitation to dinner from the great man of the parish. This would vanquish their traducers, and when once they were in good favour in that quarter they could bid defiance to the coterie of their enemies. Being on the side of law and order no one could make capital out of the invitation to the parish house, but there were many heart burns that evening when the worthy constable arrayed himself in his best, and had his consort decked out in all her fancy finery going to the coveted dinner.

He plied his calling without molestation after that great event, and now we take leave of the custodian of the peace.

THE VILLAGE FAVOURITES.

LETTY was far in advance of the most spoiled sufferer

in a district that claimed a motley group of notable derelicts. There was old Mat who had neither eyes, nose or ears, and whose mouth and tongue were gradually disappearing under the hideous touch of lupus. Alice the cripple had every form of acute ailment from rheumatism to the latest discovered internal disease termed by some unpronounceable name by the doctors. Consumption in various forms claimed some patient sufferers, but the protege of Lady Gwendoline cast all the others into the shade, by the notice and care bestowed on her in her life-long sickness.

It was a pleasure to go into the little neat home of our friend and see the elderly woman propped up in a snow-white bed, with everything around her cheerful looking. Few suffered so long and so acutely as the inhabitant of the little cottage. However, at the age of three score and ten her complexion was clear and fresh and her eyes bright, whilst her fund of talk was as vivacious as if she was going for some social event.

Her sick-bed was not monotonous or sad like others. She had Christian resignation, and the womanly wish to please her friends and patrons, therefore she hid away her pains. Miss Mitford would have revelled in describing this sweet and placable person.

At one time the doctor's wife would be found making tea there for a select few, at another time the local clergyman would be found discussing parish news with the old lady who ruled her refractory neighbours from the sick-bed. She had an interest in all their drab lives, and could influence them when the great man at the church failed. They loved to come into the sick-room with its bric-a-brac ornaments and tastefully arranged flowers and gloat their eyes in surroundings different from their

own untidy homes, where a little care and thrift would have worked a transformation. The Lady Bountiful of Letty was an elderly gentlewoman, who came in due season and saw that her dependent did not want for little delicacies. When the summer came on Letty was removed for a month to the residence of her good benefactoress, and came back much improved and strengthened to face the long dreary winter. Her local reputation went up after each sojourn, and strange to relate that not even the spiteful old women of the nearby lane grudged her luck. She had a fund of good sense and never aroused their resentment or contradicted their ignorance. She was amiable and inoffensive and her talk interested and stimulated her betters, and kept in check her inferiors. Such was the happy invalid who gave others the lesson that we can all do a part in the bivouac of life.

PATRICK, THE VILLAGE APOTHECARY.

IN our country, where the young people were generally of a sound constitution, it was very seldom that anyone required more than a dose of salts or some such purgative. Bilious complaints, indigestion, mumps or tooth-ache were the generality of complaints among the people, so the inside of the druggist's shop was an unknown sanctum. Viewed from the outside it presented an attractive appearance, with two large coloured glasses through which the sun shone or the gas radiated, thus giving them a fantastic colour. The usual patent medicines were exposed for sale, thro' which every species of human malady was advertised to be cured. In epidemics or unhealthy periods the compounder of

medicine had a brisk trade, which did not seem to improve his acid temper.

When the old women felt the cough coming on, they rushed to the medicine shop in "The Mall" with their empty bottles, for some of the mixture to stop the attack, and indulged in a little gossip with some old neighbour. If the proprietor heard any noise he abused the delinquents and grew exasperating. If a sufferer from toothache came at such an evil hour he pulled the decayed member with a vengeance, and oftentimes the one nearest to it. He hustled the person then out of the chair and threatened pains and penalties if any blood was spilt on the premises. It would require one of great nerves to go through the ordeal that his rude dentistry exacted. The customers bantered him oftentimes, and took many sly opportunities to pay him back for his bluster and rudeness. He was the terror of the wayward and nervous, and was an equal with the greatest virago in repartee.

Some of the old ladies who had the medicine craze, drank a good deal out of their bottles before they left the shop, and it was not an unusual thing to make a request to replenish it on the same day, much to the anger of the compounder. Or again it happened often that a feeble person dropped the bottle and saturated the floor with its contents. The choleric druggist would then go into tantrums of rage with the offenders.

Still, he was one of the lights of the district, and he was reckoned a man of learning and position. The Latin names of the medicines made a great impression, and I can remember as a boy the awe that I felt as I spelt the names *chamomilla*, *acidum nitricum*, *ipeca-cuanha*, *nux vomica*, etc.

When the medicine vendor had an occasion to go for a walk or any other business, he pasted a notice on the door stating that he was gone for a walk etc., and would be back at such an hour. He never advanced with the times, and kept exclusively to the selling of drugs like the old time chemists.

He was in his place at all seasons, and seemed to be favoured with unusual good health, so that during the long series of years in business, he was never missing through illness. In spite of repellent habits and a saucy tongue, he had good qualities, or, in other words, he preferred to do kindness by stealth. He was good by contraries, and never desired to be taken for anything but a scold.

A modern establishment now takes the place of the old physic maker, and an array of soaps, tooth-brushes, and American patent medicines and all the up-to-date belongings of the present day Pharmacy supplant the grim and gray past. We doubt very much if it ministers as well to the human ills of its customers, as when the old dispenser compounded the white and brown fluids, the blue and brown powders, the green brown and yellow ointments, the buff plasters, black lozenges, blue and pink pills for which he was famous.

THE VAGRANTS.

THE ideas formed of these houseless rovers of the Sylvan world are not of the most prepossessing kind. The usual knowledge of them has been derived from the pages of poetry and romance, rather than from the authentic history of personal observation. Romancers say that the weird gipsy has mysterious incarnations,

and is subject to wild bursts of impetuous and revengeful passions. They have been for a few hundred years what the Jews were to the people of other centuries. They have their pleasures and cares, their likings and hatred, their propensity to the dishonest and dis honourable like other people.

In some places they pitch tents, anon they live in waggons. Many are ragged, unwashed, and unrestrained, with their women with dishevelled hair, and the men lazily smoking and sleeping, others go to fairs with horses, are thrifty, and have the picturesque in their tents.

Some are popularly supposed to live by working on the credulities of their fellows, and are themselves singularly superstitious.

They are not so irreligious in their habits and mode of thought as is too readily believed of them. I have met them in my travels, and always found them interesting, owing to their ambulatory life.

The Romani and Gipsy languages are full of tales or traditions which are singularly entertaining, and serve as valuable contributions to the department of folk-lore.

To come suddenly on a straggling company of vagrants in the night time, when the lights of the tents are aglow, and the camp is perhaps in conference, more or less gives a startled feeling to the average person, owing to the mystery hanging round the wandering race.

In our old town they were feared and disliked, but took care never to come into conflict with popular feelings. If they pilfered it was from some far off neighbours. When they quarrelled it was a tribal affair and concerned no one else, and when they cheated it

was at the remote markets that they sold their blind and maimed animals. They intermarried, but no stranger to the clan desired or was invited to share the fortunes of the children of Hagar. They were fairly tidy and clean, and their outdoor life was healthy and pleasant, and fitted them for the hardy constitutions that they possessed.

One should be bred and born a gipsy to relish the life, but at once the taste for the wandering healthy life entered the blood there was no greater attraction on earth. Who can read that most interesting book of Borrow in his journey selling Bibles through Spain, without being convinced of this truth ? What the desert is to the Arab the Gipsy encampment is to the Ishmaelites of our roads !

A gipsy wedding and funeral are events never to be forgotten, owing to the scenic effect. A London coster's affairs are tame near such events. The gipsy has a history that casts into the shade the pageants of some of the most ancient institutions. It is so full of legendary lore that it baffles pursuit. Therefore each age and country have added something striking or weird to these interesting spectacles. The Catholic wanderer is the only one who will countenance a religious ceremony, but the racial characteristics will appear side by side with it.

Outside of dishonesty, gipsy encampments are more free from crime than is generally conceded by a misinformed public. To most people the gipsy circle is as foreign in all its administration as when it started long centuries ago in the impenetrable forests and under the burning azure skies of eastern lands.

It was restful and idealistic to our wondering and

youthful eyes to behold the camp on summer days in the bright sunshine, or under the shadows of autumn, when the sear of the leaf was on, and the falling acorns seemed a fairy noise as they fell on the crisp leaves. What a glamour, owing to early impressions, overshadowed the vagrant train, lending charm and mystery to the encampments wherever we met them in the succeeding years ?

The life of the wanderers is bound up in the mind of millions with dappling sunshine, apple blossoms, wild flowers, blue skies above emerald fields in a countryside remote from the busy haunts of modern industrialism.

OUR POLITICIANS.

IT was with good title that our civic life wore its air of originality, especially in the body politic. The politicians of our civic junta were serio-comic, and not a few took their deliberations otherwise. Their meetings consisted of inane speeches, long resolutions, and wound up as a mutual admiration society,—or a fracas. The Government was denounced in all moods and tenses for everything it performed as well as for things left undone. Under the heading of national enemies came all who could not see eye to eye with the village Hampdens. The orator of the most violent speech was the hero of the meeting, and it was humorous to read the report in next day's paper. To see one's name in print was an envied honour, and so the world of politics went on, and ignorant and scheming men were elevated to place and power.

In pursuing the lurid history of those chiefs of partisan patriotism it must be recorded that some were honest



THE VILLAGE POLITICIANS.

though mistaken in their stand, others lead us to the recesses of the mean. I remember one city father who surpassed anything I have met with in a quarter of a century for vindictiveness. The upper and middle class, and they were not many in our neighbourhood, abstained from politics as we beheld them. The Chairman had a bad impediment in his speech, but his bravery in a faction fight more than covered this defect. One of the constant speakers was a pugnacious but respected old resident who usually cleared his throat several times and began with an apology saying that he was suffering from a cold. We looked for that prelude always, and the younger members tittered at the oft repeated excuse.

There was a little aspirant for local honours who was my ideal of a great man in those years of crudeness and youth. He, poor man, was the dullest speaker imaginable, and set all the members fidgetting, but he had other redeeming points. A local labourer followed very often, but he was militant rather than oratorical. This gathering was the arbiter of the finances of the town as it was necessary to have its imprimatur to be returned to office, no wonder then that we had a relic of the middle ages surviving in most departments. The custodians of the city at night, or night watch as they were called, were elderly men dressed in huge frieze coats with the old fashioned Puritan hats, and each had a large baton made of oak. They called out each hour and paraded the streets when not asleep in a hallway. They were too old to be able to chase an offender, and nearly always thought discretion the better part of valour by hiding when a row was on. The money given to them was a waste of the rates, the same could be said of the other hungry office holders, and the street cleaners

who were incapable. The best customers of local political publicans received public office, and hence neglect and decay reigned triumphant.

The saying of Madam Roland was true, and great excesses sheltered themselves under the name of liberty. The romanticism of the local politicians meant well, but it had been focussed on knights errant, not modern conditions. Some ambitious ones were exhilarated by reading Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Strauss. They talked quickly and continuously, which produced a sensation of unreality and ended like a queer buzzing dream.

The fall of the modern Bastille of Irish ward politics in Dublin should be a salutary premonition to such political jobbers.

THE OLD FASHIONED THEATRE.

SUPERIOR critics called it a Gaff, but in the youthful imagination it was greater than the Duke of York's, Drury Lane, or Covent Garden. To be sure "Peter Pan" or the music of Bach were not found in this establishment, but its actors, though down and out, to use an Americanism, were able to kindle a sympathy of laughter and emotion as well as the greatest stars. The simple-minded audience forgave them for other crudities in dress and scenery. They provided amusing and instructive plays and sketches, although they had not the music of the masters such as Mozart, Sacchini, Bach, Pasquini, Handel and Hasse. One of the actors in particular was a dramatist of no mean order and lost cast only through drink.

The audience was a motley one, and comprised all

the lads and lassies of the town. The reserved seats cost threepence, and anyone sitting there was thought to be Bon ton and aping their betters, and were accordingly made to feel the ridicule of those in the pit when opportunity offered. Sometimes a spirit of mischief would seize some of the gods, and they would scatter cayenne pepper broadcast so that the audience and actors were seized with an uncontrollable fit of sneezing when turmoil would reign, and blows would be freely exchanged. Despite all, the old place gave more pleasure to its frequenters than they have ever known elsewhere.

CELEBRITIES.

AN elderly couple named Jack and Catherine were an interesting and singular pair.

The wife had a remarkable gift of speech, and a good nature, that created hosts of friends wherever she went, and made her a lady of importance in our parish. Although she had this reputation to support, still she never forgot her less conspicuous partner, who was a cripple for many years, and looked on her to support him in his affliction. She was a seamstress, and employed several girls to assist her at the business. It was her duty to solicit trade which kept her always going on the rounds. If she did not receive an order it did not seem to matter, she left a ray of cheery atmosphere in the shop or home that she visited. Womanlike she loved gossip, but never conveyed what would be prejudicial to any character. She was reputed to know how things were moving in domestic and parish circles, and this enhanced her personality. Although her task

of bread winner for the home would have given an ordinary woman more than enough to do, she managed always to be so obliging and ubiquitous where her neighbours were concerned that a stranger would have thought that she had nothing to engross her own time or no necessity to satisfy at home. Under this admirable exterior she carried more than a usual share of anxiety and domestic sorrow. A numerous family of children had claimed her for a most devoted parent, and as each attained the years of puberty they usually contracted some sickness and died, which robbed the little home of its domestic joys and indicated a forlorn old age. The husband was then stricken with paralysis, and her cup of sorrow was filled to the brim in being deprived of her bread winner. He was left as a charge on her industry and care for many years, still she loved and ministered to him with all the romance and chivalry of their early love. It was a touching sight to see how her eye kindled as she came home each afternoon after soliciting and executing commissions for many weary hours. Jack became as brisk as his sad condition would permit, and the tender wife catered to all his wishes, and made a cheerful meal at which they talked as if all the world was a beautiful vista before them. Then she took her place as director and chief factotum of the workshop until late at night. Neighbours dropped in with their cares and joys to relate and many more unfortunate ones received secret aid out of the scanty larder and family purse. Mrs. Catherine was grave and quiet with the bashful and afflicted, and she could enter with zest into the joys of others. In her more prosperous days she loved excursions and diversions, but contented herself in the days of adversity with a succession of duties.

Her little home was a picture of domestic comfort for one in her sphere of life. Its old gable ends and quaint little porch were picturesque if irregular. The little casements were filled with flowers and a miniature flower court held sway with a patch of cabbages and potatoes behind the house, a few cages of linnets with their cheerful songsters, and a beautiful specimen of the feline race completed the entourage. Jack was always introduced to visitors and was impressed with his own importance, but was quite content that his portly wife should be looked on as the heart of the establishment, and the predominant partner. Jack had been a disciple of Isaac Walton in his years of health, and it was pathetic to see him sit at the cottage door with the far off look, on summer's evenings, as other men went fishing to the nearby river. He had spent many evenings in the gloaming near the mill race, or on the grassy banks of the peaceful and deep river meandering through delightful rustic scenes.

The old mill and its environment was a subject worthy of the brush of Constable, and its light and shade on fine evenings would be a fit theme for Claude of Lorraine to revel in.

Many travellers admired the landscape, and its pastoral beauties, and no restless spirit could fail to be soothed by the sound of the adjacent falls, where the waters dashed, foamed, and ran riot.

Such scenes were no doubt in the mind's eye of Jack, on such occasions and cast their passing shadow on his countenance. He was as enthusiastic as ever for his long lost sport, but the nervous twitches of his palsied frame reminded him that it was time for him to seek refuge in his little cottage, not in the wiles of the fisher-

man. He no doubt felt a little envy as he saw brawny Peter pass with his fishing line and trappings every evening to try his luck on the golden tide.

Peter was lord and master of Julia, whose little shop stood at the head of the adjacent street, over which the magic words were "Licensed to sell Beer, spirits, tobacco and snuff." In former years Julia had another sign on one of the gables, which advertised, "Milk fresh from the cow sold here," and some local wag rendered it ridiculous by printing the word "asses" before it, so it read next morning to the amused pedestrians as "Asses milk fresh from the cow sold here." Julia in her rage when one of her customers drew her attention to the grotesque advertisement, tore down the sign, gave up the sale of milk and contented herself with being a vendor of beer, spirits, etc.

Feeling her defenceless state she took Peter for better or worse, and owing to Peter's love of ease and convenience it was not for better that the words of matrimony meant to her. He found it delightful to saunter abroad and forget the care of his spouse, whilst she poor thing, was the embodiment of thrift and industry, and as the family increased she was compelled to increase her stock by making it supply all the wants and luxuries of her customers. In one window she displayed beers and liquors, and in the other small window flourished soap, candles, bacon, cheese, butter, calicoes, dolls, brooms and brushes, needles and bread, lamp oil and herrings were adjacent, so that Julia could fairly say she was cosmopolitan in her stock.

Peter recruited his health on the mossy bank of the river, into which he deftly baited his lines, and his whole faculties were given to the "gentle art" so his presence



PETER'S JULIA.

at home was continually wanting. He loved to discourse in the evenings on his skill over the finny prey on which he had spent the day to entrap. Woe to those who disputed about his angling for he showed the dexterity and patience which it demanded. He rushed at once for his fishing paraphernalia, much to the annoyance of his wife, and went through the process and expedients used to decoy the fish from their native elements. Old Jack was delighted when Peter visited him and gave a willing ear when he expatiated on his favourite angling.

The neighbouring river was the home of trout and salmon, and who knew the peculiar baits better than the two friends ? Artificial flies with odd names were quite familiar to them, and when they enumerated the experience and expedients devised to capture the fish, the neighbours thought that after all angling, however gentle, was not a simple art. Julia's Peter then at least was good for something, and when he went through the display in hooking and playing for a salmon the popular estimation of him increased. The art of an angler was tested as the elaboration showed, and as the subject was a wide one the neighbours did not dare to dispute. Julia often paused in her drudgery to admire her husband's oratorical skill in explaining his favourite pastime.

AN ANCIENT CHARACTER OF OUR TOWN.

THE OLD GENTLEWOMAN.

THE old lady was a widow, who lived alone, the manners of her condition and time of life were so much the more apparent. She generally dressed in plain silks, that

made a gentle rustling as she moved about the silence of her room ; she wore a pretty cap with a lace border that ended under her chin. In a packet at her side was an enamelled watch, unless it was locked up in a drawer of her toilet for fear of accidents. Her form was rather slight and trim than otherwise, and evidently had been a shapely one in her youth. Contented with these and other evident indications of a good shape, and letting her young friends understand that she could afford to display herself even then. For embellishment she usually carried two antique satchels, in the one was her handkerchief, and any heavier matter that was not likely to come out with it, such as the change of a sixpence ; in the other was a miscellaneous assortment, consisting of a pocket book, a bunch of keys, a needle-case, a spectacle-case, crumbs of biscuit, a nutmeg and grater, a smelling-bottle, and according to the season, an orange or apple, which, after many days, she drew out, warm and glossy, to give to some little urchin that had been well behaved. She generally occupied two rooms, in the neatest condition possible. In one chamber was a bed with a white coverlet, built up high and round to look well, and with curtains of a pastoral pattern, consisting alternately of large plants, and shepherds and shepherdesses. On the mantelpiece also were more shepherds and shepherdesses, with dot-eyed sheep at their feet, all in coloured ware, the man perhaps in a pink jacket and knots of ribbons at his knees and shoes, holding his crook lightly in one hand, and with the other at his breast, turning his toes out and looking tenderly at the shepherdess.

The toilet was ancient, carved at the edges, and tied about with a snow-white drapery of muslin. Beside it

were various boxes, mostly japan ; and the set of drawers were exquisite things for a little girl to rummage, containing ribbons and laces of various kinds, linen smelling of lavender, and the artificial flowers in which there was always dust in the corners, a heap of pocket books, kept for a series of years, and pieces of dress long gone by, such as head-fronts, and flowered satin shoes with enormous heels. The stock of old love letters were always under especial lock and key. So much for the bed-room. In the sitting-room was rather a sparse assortment of shining old mahogany furniture, or carved arm-chairs equally old, with chintz draperies down to the ground,—a folding or other screen with Chinese figures, their round, little-eyed, meek faces perking sidewise ; a stuffed bird perhaps in a glass case, a portrait of her husband over the mantelpiece, in a coat with frog-buttons, and a delicate frilled hand lightly inserted in the waistcoat,—and opposite him, on the wall, was a piece of embroidered literature, framed and glazed, containing some moral distich or maxim worked in angular capital letters, with two trees or parrots below in their proper colours.

She boasted of ancient ancestry, living simple pious and parochial lives never in trade or making money, and resting on their tradition for gentility, high church principles and Tory tendencies.

As the last of her race she was a strange mixture of domination and humility, of acceptation and cynicism. Although different in the social standard from her neighbours she never appeared anxious that they should notice it.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

As long as we could recollect the schoolmistress was reckoned to be old and ugly, and a confirmed newsmonger. A flatterer of vain parents, a sly mischief maker where ever she had an axe to grind against her clients. A general brewer of discord and many more unenviable attributes. Disappointed in matrimonial endeavours, and being sphinx-like in appearance, must evidently have inspired the cruelty that she manifested in manifold ways. Her one time pupils who are now like "the grave of a household," painted by Mrs. Hemans, "By mount and stream and sea," can vouchsafe for my statement. I met some of them far apart in other lands and we discussed the funny and malicious traits of her whom they feared as a village Providence. She was engaged in everything social, religious and political, that took place in her little horizon. Her energy was boundless where the interests of her family were concerned. If her sister the seamstress did not get the making of the first trousers for Johnny or Joe, or the pinafore for Mary, or if other vested interests did not go to the other members of her relatives, woe to the unfortunate child at school! A system of petty tyranny was organized against the inoffensive scholar. If the parents were in easy circumstances, and pliable to her demands, she had many ways to extract a levy, and some children were exalted to the skies, both to the parents and public, though many times undeservingly. She would play on the religious susceptibility of mothers and tell them what nice things the clergy said about them,—all of course fabrications. At stated periods



THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

she would simulate sickness, and it was amusing to find what amount of gifts came to her from deluded persons. Her family would then have a picnic of it, and the spell of pretended sickness would pass away. On her next visit to the lady who sent the brandy she would extol her virtues for sending this remedy for her cold, and would then utter the hoarse cough that she could conjure at will. She thus paid a thanksgiving visit to each of her benefactors in succession, and went through a like performance. She was a veritable Circe to the youth of the place, and many of the hobbledehoys stood in as much fear of her as their juniors. Like the schoolmaster in "The Deserted Village," her love for learning was at fault, yet she managed to hold her place, and could reckon all the staid mothers of her pupils as being at one time or another under her jurisdiction. As a disciplinarian and a kindergarten teacher she was unexcelled. Like the Lady Confectioner she was a chief functionary in the church, and retailed ecclesiastical news far and near as a means of enhancing her importance in the parish circles. She had witnessed births, deaths, and marriages of the parish longer than most of the people, so she knew the virtues and failings of the populace very well, I believed, if she died in my time that she would have a funeral equal to a bishop, but such is the forgetfulness of the world that I learned of her quiet and unrecorded passing away. Probably she had tired out her contemporaries, and her weird personality was conveniently forgotten with her great plumed, battered and dusty hat, her sallow gaunt face, and the long coral earrings which dangled from her ears.

THE CATHEDRAL VERGER.

JAMES was a functionary of importance in our parish, and had been a misfit in his previous avocation. Having squandered his substance, he was obliged to seek another walk in life, and through influence he was appointed to a parish office. Previous misfortune should have taught him the lesson of abstinence from strong drink, but adversity passed unheeded.

After his appointment he was on trial, and showed his best behaviour, but when the period of probation passed he fell back into his old habits. Very often notices of baptisms, weddings, sickness and death were brought to him in vain, as he was usually absent.

Everybody knew what was going on and that James was safely seated in the snug room of a nearby public house, and not even the schoolmistress dared to brave his wrath. The great man of the parish sent scouts around looking for the verger, and after some time he would be found in bed suffering from a toothache, according to the story brought back to the clergyman.

He was due in the mornings to ring the bell and open the church. Frequently people found that the appointed hour had passed, and the verger was sleeping peacefully when some urchin was sent hurriedly for him. After due time he appeared, flushed and angry at the little crowd of devotees waiting to get in for their morning orisons.

He lampooned them on the first chance presented, and it was sure to be conveyed back. His genius lay in his partiality for fine words, and making bad poetry tinged with fiery nationality. None of the gossips of the

parish cared to betray his many failings, they reckoned on his fine frenzy. His weak point was like Tam O'Shanter, a dread of the supernatural or an undue fear of ghosts or spirits. Some of the mischievous boys often punished him through his weakness, by hiding themselves in the Cathedral surroundings and giving forth unearthly groans or cries. Oftentimes he fairly ran out of the Minster, bedewed with cold perspiration. People laughed secretly at his vagaries, but dared not do so openly.

He was a regular village beadle, and duly rated himself accordingly. When he fairly saturated himself with ardent spirits he usually courted Morpheus. On one occasion he awoke in the afternoon, mistaking it for early morning, and he hurried to the belfry and rang the bell for what he supposed morning service. Happily for him the pastor was away, or he would have paid the penalty of his carouse. It infuriated him to even mention this incident, but it did not save him from other ridiculous mistakes.

He was the pride of village politicians, and was consulted by aspiring poets on the merits of their effusions, so that saved the day for a long time. Eventually he was dismissed from his post, much to the relief of the community.

A GENIAL OLD MAID.

One of the most lovable characters of the old town was Ellen, who was an old maid, with a heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness. She was not a native, but had come early in life to the old place and engrafted herself on the affections of two generations

of its inhabitants. Her daily doings for forty years and more would have formed subject for any philanthropic writer to record. Most people dislike one who is continually collecting for some charitable object, but with Ellen it was different. Her artlessness and naivete had great success where others with more varied gifts failed. Most people liked to have her visit them, even when it meant subscriptions, as her Celtic wit and frankness made her a general favourite.

She felt that as she was disinterested and that those on whom she called were the beneficiaries not the losers. When some churlish person resented her appeals her good natured acuteness disarmed them, and she robbed the cynical and those looking out for the bad motives of their cold and evil intentions.

When the discussion of some neighbour's fault took place, she was excuser for the person detracted, and oftentimes turned the envy against the absent party into admiration by the recital of some of the unknown qualities of such a person.

The knowledge of her pure intention, brought genuine happiness to her, and no matter what transpired it never ruffled her equanimity of temper. She was never known to be harsh to any neighbour, and had plenty of just grievances against those who preyed on her good nature and credulity if she harboured them, but "Her pity gave ere charity began."

Her home was unpretending, but comfortable, and the visitor felt an atmosphere of welcome on entering it. The mistress was seen in her more human and genial guise in her little abode. She was enthusiastic about her cows as she relied on them to supplement her income, not that she was entirely dependent on them.

Most of the milk that they yielded went to some poor persons in distress. They were her pets as others would lavish their affections on dogs or cats. Each had the name of some dear friend or important person, and they responded to their names as a matter of course. They were the favourites of the locality, and anyone who desired to be in the good graces of Miss Ellen should be fond of her clumsy charges. That was her little weakness and it was accepted by her neighbours as an appropriate thing in itself ?

She had only one romantic love affair in her life, when long years before she was devoted to William, who was a town constable. She loved to recount the episode to strangers. Her friends did not encourage it, and no opportunity was presented to join her fortune to that of her lover until her parent's death. William had meanwhile come to the conclusion that their love's young dream was passed, and that marriage question was a thing of the past, so he went to another place to live over his disappointment.

Ellen continued her usual routine of duty at home and service to her neighbours and the church, and strove to forget her Romeo. He made a few visits and was welcomed to the scenes of his former love making. He was then advanced in age, with a rugged frame, and as one of his eyes was injured in the discharge of his police duty, he had a noticeable glass one in its place. To Ellen there was no difference, he was the beau ideal of her fancy, and they recounted the course of their love making with complacency, much to the amusement of their friends and neighbours.

No one enjoyed bantering at her own expense more than Ellen, and she never resented the oft repeated

charge of being an old maid crossed in love. What was William's loss was a gain to a bevy of friends, and the townsfolk in general.

THE DOCTOR'S LADY.

THE ample proportions of the good doctor made him quite a landmark, like the village pump in our town. Unlike many of our civic functionaries he was a taciturn Hercules, and not very distinguished for anything in particular. He discharged his onerous duties amongst the poor and was very considerate to them. He was already growing advanced in years, when a designing woman applied for a vacancy in his staid home as house-keeper. So far he was impervious to all the advances of the gentle sex, but was destined to be vanquished by the manoeuvres of this wily daughter of Eve. She set her cap for the big doctor, and women fairly gasped at her audacity as she presumed to capture him.

In the ordinary circumstances of life she could never expect to marry a professional man, and her daring was all the more noticeable in a place where nothing escaped detection, still she captured the prize that more favoured women failed to grasp. Hence the heartburn in lady circles was very acute, and they were twitted for want of courage in permitting a nobody to become the doctor's wife.

In our circle the Attorney and Doctor's wife were our peeresses, and accordingly carried a high head. They looked with disdain at the grocer's and butcher's ladies, and moved in a different sphere, merely exchanging a distant salutation to the people in trade. They in turn received scant recognition from the haughty

wife of a newly created Knight who had previously been a shop girl in the locality.

It was said that the housekeeper fairly thrust herself on the easy going physician. Like most big quiet men he dreaded antics, and when she pretended to swoon and aroused the place by her stage acting he fairly capitulated, rather than thrust her forth and be the butt of spiteful tongues as a monster of cruelty to a helpless female. Long before her assumption of his name she industriously spread abroad the news of their marriage, bribed and wheedled others to circulate and advocate the event. When remonstrated with by the doctor she protested that he encouraged her and cried bitterly at his cruelty.

After some years an heir appeared and the old man was reconciled to the marriage.

THE BANKER'S WIFE AND SISTER.

IN the leading and most pretentious street of the town dwelt two little ancient ladies in a commodious and pretty home. They were bent with age and debility but woman-like had their natural conceits.

Both dressed in widow's weeds, and any peculiarity that one had the other affected it in due course. The taller lady was the wife of a long departed private banker, and the diminutive companion was his sister. They seldom went abroad except to early church, and for a walk to promenade their dog Tiny.

Any early riser going in the direction of their home on a winter's morning would meet the old ladies dressed in black, and each carrying a lantern making their way to a neighbouring church famous for its early devotions.

On their arrival there they would extinguish the lanterns and light a candle so that they could read their prayer books. This was repeated daily for a long series of years and continued until their decease. Their odd conduct at home was often noised abroad for they had to employ servants and somewhat unfortunately for their peace of mind they had giddy girls who loved to annoy them and violate their cherished traditions.

A vacant place had to be laid at the table at each meal, for the dead relative, and the dog Tiny had his own position at all meals. On his death they gave him a royal funeral and were overwhelmed with grief at the loss.

On employing a servant they first asked if she was inclined for the military, meaning thereby did she keep company with soldiers ? If not she was employed, but instantly dismissed if found out to be in their company. The girls took advantage of this dislike of the military, and sometimes after a few days would have a soldier to call and ask for them when the old ladies would instantly give a month's wages and have them to leave.

They invited no acquaintance or friend to their beautiful home, but were charitable in their own way to the poor. The gentleman in his day was opulent, and had a magnificent hanging or roof garden over a large building, a very rare and costly undertaking.

AN "AT HOME" IN THE OLD TOWN.

ONE of the most interesting little local homesteads was that of the lady spoken of as the predominant partner of the baker. Architecturally on the outside it was not like a creation of Inigo Jones, but interiorly it was a neat

domestic abode. The lady had been a lace maker in her youth, and seemed to have imbibed the sense of the artistic from her avocation. She was then no longer young in years but as youthful and frisky in spirit as a playful kitten. The other women of the neighbourhood did not dress so well or enjoy life as she did. Her table had abundance of choice and good food and she went to amusements frequently and took her siesta in the afternoon, although the wage earner should be waiting at the door. She was interested in social and literary movements and her reading kept her up long after the lights were extinguished in all the adjoining residences. She was, of course, an ardent patriot, and was as nimble as any of the commonality to go to a public gathering, when she was easily affected by the lurid pictures of misgovernment portrayed by designing politicians. I often felt very amused when she told me that she sobbed bitterly when she heard from the platform of the injustices done to patriots. Now her red letter day had come when she overstepped the other competitors of the street who must have been envious when she gave an "At Home!" Some were heard to say, "why the idea of it in such an upstart? It is no wonder her poor man is slaving himself to death and she foolishly spending his money?" She dressed specially for the occasion, and it was whispered about that she was like an old Dowager Lady. She had all the good things to eat and drink that money could procure, and which the not over elegant tastes of her guests could appreciate.

The neighbourhood was aglow with suppressed excitement, and many of the uninvited stood in groups quietly and complacently criticising the guests as they came. The first arrival was a prosperous pig dealer and his



THE HOSTESS.

wife whom the corner group said could eat a whole ham. He was on the local Council, and was like a donkey in a china shop when he put on the red cloak. He was returned to the Public Board because he controlled so many votes and was an obedient henchman of the Patriotic Party. Such an edition as his friend in the 6th Ward of New York who was a nominee of Tammany Hall. His lady did not know how to wear gloves it was said, and eat starch to make herself pale and slim. The tobacconist and party next appeared, and a suppressed laugh was heard, for he poor man had a face like a distillery, and could not utter a decent word in English. The lady who measured the halfpenny worths of snuff and tobacco over the counter was reported to be an aspiring hostess and shrugged her square shoulders at her less fortunate sisters, reminding one of Mangan's poem, "Oh ! Woman of the Three Cows." The pawn-broker and a bevy of daughters were next welcomed, he was the Mayor elect. He was full of rich bulls fragrant of the days of Sir Boyle Roache. All the lesser fry followed and made clumsy bows to the flushed little hostess. A general murmur of regret was heard on account of the absence of the local Member of Parliament. It would have been a never-to-be-forgotten day if he attended ! He was a local butcher before greatness was thrust on him, and was known by the sobriquet of "Sheep's tail." He never scarcely came home then, for his lady, who had been a seamstress, enjoyed the London society ever so much, and their daughter was attending a school there in which a Knight's daughter was a pupil. When this spicy item was mentioned, the member nudged his spouse into silence, it would not do for it to be known that they aped

gentility. He, poor man, could have blacked a Lord's shoes, so fond like Tom Moore of old was he of one. Still, he had to cry away with them at the hustings.

"All went merry as a marriage bell" in the house, and the guests soon got tired of hearing the prima donna of a nearly third-class theatre play Rag-time tunes. Lemonade was first gracefully handed round, but it was a study to see the looks of disgust on the faces of the company, and the Mayor elect asked for something stronger, which was waiting galore at hand.

Things became lively, and the company instinctively made for the table where eating and speech-making were the order of the day. The crowd increased outside and some were peering through the windows to see the patriots at meat. Some wanted to dance, but the hostess had once been to an "At Home," and knew that such was not in order. The jovial gathering broke up at last when hired cabs were sent to take them home.

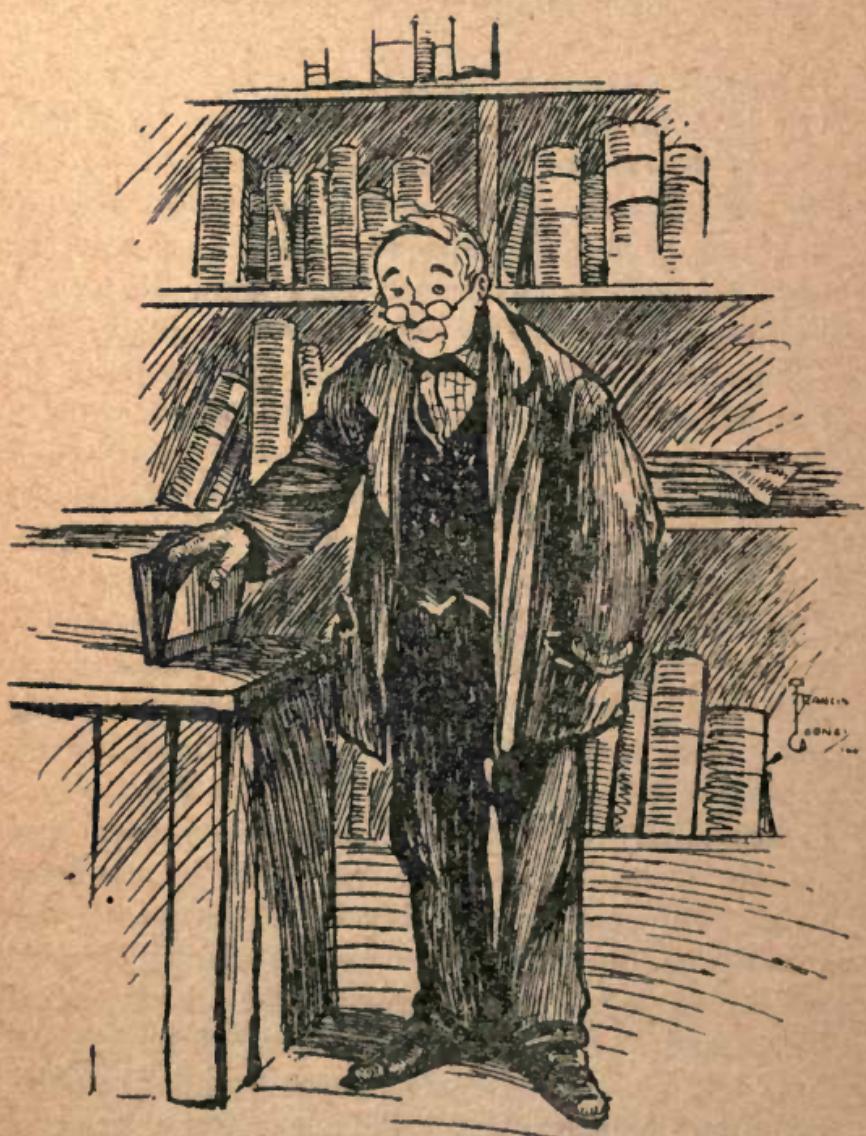
It was hinted that some of them had partaken too freely of the good things provided! A chapter had closed in the life of the household, and many photographs of the guests found their way to the album of the hostess, to remind her of a great event in her life. The new Mayor invited her to the banquet given in his honour where national songs were rendered, to the delight of the burgesses who paid more rates and taxes than any town or municipality in the Kingdom. Someone had to pay for the rule of incompetents thrust into office!

At some other occasion we shall return to our old friends the political ring of our native town:—

"Gone are the heads of the silvery grey
And the youth who are there have a brow of care,
And the place is hushed where the children played,
Nought looks the same save the nest we made."

AN ANCIENT BOOKSELLER.

OLD Peter was one of the notabilities of the town, and was kept in his literary occupation more by circumstances than choice. He kept a bookstall at one end of the market and had the most singular assortment of literature in his shop windows to attract the attention of every shade of customers. Jack and Jill were side by side with a copy of some scientific author. Red Riding Hood and works of George Eliot or Ouida lay peacefully together, a musty copy of Aristotle rubbed shoulder to shoulder with the "Imitation," by A'Kempis, and the life of St. Theresa lay near Byron's works. Peter had a great deal of rubbish that he knew of, but his very limited education prevented him from seeing the rare though oftentimes ragged copies of celebrated writers lying in neglect and shade. He was as apt to light the fire with them rather than tear up a trashy newspaper, and if his attention was drawn to the vandalism he grew angry and would not sell the book at any price. I found that his criterion was to look on the value of most of his stock by the good covers they carried, forgetting the old adage, "Never take the book by the cover." I soon measured his mind, and would go in and carelessly ask for a book, noticed beforehand, "How much do you expect for that old book?" He would mention some prohibitive price, and then I answered that it did not matter as the book was not worth much. Finally he would cut down the price very low, and I had the bargain. If he were asked direct, and the prospective purchaser seemed desirous to get the book, then indeed the difficulty arose! I



THE OLD BOOKSELLER.

often wondered what drove himself and his slatternly family into such a business. A connoisseur would find treasures in that old untidy shop little dreamt of, and a few gentlemen of culture got rare purchases there for a trifle, just as an old master is often found in most unlikely regions. Select and rare libraries are becoming more scarce every year, very few make the library now their chief study. Old Peter's stock consisted of the books sold for a small sum by servants and others who received them in the break up of the old families whose children are now in the bush in Australia, or the back woods of America. Dickens would have found a wealth of copy in Peter the huckster bookseller of our town.

A finer piece of comedy never issued from the pen of Moliere than many of the discourses carried on between the old bookseller and his good-humoured customers.

On a late visit I noticed the familiar name over the old shop, but Peter has long since joined the great majority.

PECULIAR CHARACTERS.

PADDY and Joan were rare characters in our old locality. Of the two, Joan possessed the greater originality, and was the leading partner. They had lived more than the usual span of three score and ten, and condensed into their humble lives more privation and greater fortitude than I have met or heard of concerning any humble couple in their sphere of life.

At the time that I was acquainted with them they were near their eightieth milestone in the race of life and were the type of domestic felicity, although each had to labour for their daily bread. Mick had entered the struggle for existence when he was a lad of seven

years, and never knew idleness or ease until he lay down his aged head on his death-bed and left his partner of sixty years to the one unfilial son of their marriage. This ingrate never gave the old couple any comfort, but cast himself and his family on the old couple whenever sickness or want of employment occurred in his house, which was not seldom. He had a little learning, which, as the poet says “is a dangerous thing,” and accordingly he looked down upon his honest but illiterate parents.

The aged pair made heroic efforts to give him an education, or, as they called it, “schooling,” and if he had any gratitude or good nature he would have kept them in their declining years. On the contrary he grew ashamed of their uncouth ways and simple manners, and acted as the drone bee does in the hive.

The venerable father began life as a farm labourer at a miserable wage, and married his master’s illpaid servant maid at an early age. Designing politicians pretend to be shocked at the very low scale of remuneration given to rural labourers, and there is no doubt that there is an ample avenue open to redress their grievances. Joseph Arch enlightened the public of the last generation in relation to the English farm labourers termed Hodge, but so far Ireland and Scotland have had no doughty champion to vindicate their claims in like manner.

The eldest born of Paddy and Joan appeared in the first year of their love and necessity, and owing to the long hours of labour and want of someone to mind the baby, the mother was forced to carry the infant tied on her back at work like the slave mothers in the old Southern plantations. It was a common case at the time, and there were no militant feminists to champion their down-trodden sisters.

To recount their early struggles would be to give the "short but simple annals of the poor" in their day. The husband many times had to tramp long distances to and from work, and they knew no delicacy except Indian meal and sour milk. Tea, bread, and meat were things only to conjure in the mind or on rare occasions. Potatoes and herrings were a variation in the list of dietary, yet the hardy peasantry of Scotland and Ireland raised their brawny sons on such fare. Such crude material fought the hard Continental wars of England under Napier and Wellington, and proved the dictum about the superiority of the "Simple life."

Paddy and Joan eventually gave up the grinding poverty of the country and drifted into the old town, where he secured a position as a casual labourer, and as they were schooled in economy they lived comparatively well on the higher wages of the town. He improved his position by getting employment and a fair wage in a local manufactory, where he was retained for his fidelity until long after he was beyond labour.

The old woman was famous at rearing fowl, and simply flooded the locality with them. She forgot evidently that the street was not a common or moor where fowl had free scope. The neighbours were not thankful to Joan for her industry, for it meant that her hens and chicken lived gratuitously at their expense, and caused great confusion to them by intermixing with their flock. The old woman was up in arms if anyone hinted even remotely about her pets, and few cared to stand a contest with her. One antiquated cock of the brood seemed to possess the fighting propensity of his owner, and would clear the locality of the neighbours' hens. He was sometimes pelted with stones by the

children, and Joan hurried to the door with all speed when she heard the cries of distress from the major-domo of her hens. The field was cleared when her well-known voice was heard, and as there was no combatant in view, she spoke to the head of her flock in encouraging and soothing words, nerving him for the next fray. If a neighbour was sick, it was noticeable that the old woman never visited or even enquired for the sick person, but if some hen or cock received an injury or was out of sorts she betrayed keen interest in the affair. She called on the owner, sat down in the house, examined the fowl and discoursed on all the possible ailments of the breed. If a leg was broken, as was sometimes the case, she made a splinter or a match as a ligature for the limb, and called each day until the recovery was complete.

Her old man was devoted to reciting all manner of long prayers at daybreak and nightfall, and he insisted that she should be present. She did not relish this extra devotion, and he often found her asleep during their recitation. Old landmarks passed away when Paddy and Joan died.

A STRANGE AVOCATION.

MANY years ago I remember an old woman in one of the lanes of the ancient town who earned her scant living by selling spring water that was conveyed through a pump situated in her little house. Molly was the local monopolist in her own trade, and as each household came for a bucket or pail of water, they had to give the proprietress one halfpenny.

It was never recorded that anyone sickened and died

from drinking the fluid, although it was perilously near the gutter. In Molly's old age the medical authorities were beginning to acquire the light of modern science, and the little pump and well had to give way before the dictum that the water was not pure. So old Molly ended her days in the local Hospital. Strange are the shifts to which humanity is put to earn the wherewithal to supply its daily needs, and so Molly was not found catalogued in any known list of trades.

The old pump was the daily meeting place of all the gossipers far and near, who came ostensibly for pure cold water, but filled their curiosity with the tit-bits of news going around in parish circles.

Many a fierce encounter also took place when contradictions were bandied or old jealousies arose. The peaceful atmosphere would suddenly be enlivened by the clash of water vessels, and the screams of belligerents, the shrill cries of children would add to the din of warfare, and some peaceable person was dispatched at once for the local constable, who usually sauntered there as the last handful of hair was taken from the beaten foe.

Great excitement reigned next day, when the disputants were tried at the local sessions, and were bound to observe the peace with the addition of a salutary fine, so they paid dear for their pail of well water. It was interesting to witness the next meeting at the village pump. The victor of the combat usually swaggered as she beheld her defeated sister enter the house. Another encounter was only prevented by the fear of the local prison, and sometimes it required all the possible diplomacy of the old water seller to maintain order among her loquacious and unruly customers.

The prosecuting Attorney at the Police Court usually made his opening charge by saying this virago, your Worship, attacked Mrs. So-and-So. A well known County Magistrate of that period convicted or acquitted according to the cut or style of clothes worn by the accused. He had usually to ask the Clerk as to the attire, for he was blind.

The Glengarry cap, then much worn by a rough class, was sure to obtain a salutary sentence for the wearer.

STRANGERS AFTER LONG CENTURIES OF RESIDENCE.

NEAR our town there is a straggling hamlet with nothing more attractive about it than well cultivated gardens in which weeds were a strange quantity. The people of this market garden locality raised the earliest and best crops in the entire county. Here and there were dotted the houses of the inhabitants, and if their gardens were cared for their houses seemed remorselessly to take care of themselves, so untidy and neglected were they in the engrossing struggle to develop the soil.

It was a usual sight to see the animals under the one roof with the inmates, but it was not through poverty that this unenviable state of affairs prevailed ? It seemed to be hereditary, and the oldest people of the adjacent town never remember any other traditions nor their parents before them.

This strange people were said to be descendants of a Danish colony planted long centuries ago when the Norsemen came to the British Islands. They had the same religion as the majority of the peasantry, but in all

things else they were aliens and in hard labour they were strangers in the economic sense to most of their neighbours.

Their little weekly savings found their way to one of the local banks, and were not squandered. They rose early, worked continuously, and retired to their well earned rest for the most part before it was necessary to light a candle, oil lamps, gas and electricity were not thought of. If any of them introduced new and fashionable customs or luxuries they were eschewed by the other conservative members of the hamlet. At no remote time it was considered a glaring novelty to use tea, and men would not marry an otherwise eligible girl who drank "the cup that cheers but does not inebriate." Plain clothes and scanty furniture were characteristic of them. I have seen people termed snug in local phraseology using pieces of sharpened hoops of barrels as cutlery. The hermit of "Walden Pond" would have been glad to see their plain mode of living. They had meat only on Sundays, and it was coarse and so fat that it required no mastication and slipped down so to speak. The local clergy found them penurious with their money even for church purposes, and had an ingenious plan to lock the church door towards the end of the service and let them out one by one, so that they were forced to drop a coin into the collection box held up before them. The pastor, too, seemed to have acquired the same failing, and was never known to give charity, but unlike his parishioners, he supplied his spendthrift relations with the cash that he squeezed out of others.

His harum-scarum brother was a sport, and spent freely the penurious gatherings of the old ecclesiastic who grudged himself the conveniences of life. He

carried his parsimony even into the management of the church, and would buy nothing that was not indispensable. He employed a good-natured and jovial young woman as cleaner, sexton, messenger, etc., and it was one of the few sources of amusement to hear her version of parish officials and affairs. Still, she had a spirit of her own dignity, and would come out very unseemly in the church at times when no females would be tolerated. She often insisted on being discharged, but the pastor could get no one to fill the troublesome position at the little salary given to this important parish functionary. If the curate dared to give her orders she put him back in his place at once, and it was only a new hand who would try the dangerous experiment. She was surely more important than a mere curate ? As the school was near the church there was a liability that there would be noise and disturbance. She was held in awe by the children, and they would not attempt their frolics when she was nigh, but had to reserve them for the street.

The village schoolmaster was given to using very fine diction and grammar, and very big and mystifying words, jaw breakers the people termed them, but times have changed and this very important local position is now fulfilled by one who was then a little saucy girl, she is the Principal of the school, for some years and a modern school madam at that.

The only weak spot in the colony was the fondness for a little drop of whiskey once in a time. The workers were accustomed to be out in all winds and weathers, and very often got saturated to the skin with the rain. Small blame then it was for them to go into the quaint public house not far from the church. It was an attrac-

tive little place, and a lover of the old times would actually go in there for the very fact that it was so ancient looking and cosy. In the little window always found neat and clean, were some old fashioned crockery vessels with figures of animals and grotesque men on them. They were there from time immemorial, and were filled with clay pipes. A stray bottle of brandy and whiskey and some show cards of distilleries completed the decorations. The inside was a small apartment with a little counter dividing it and the shelves were filled with bottles, and some kegs of porter, etc., and a tiny tap room adjoined with seats and small tables for the customers to drink at.

The landlord and his wife were two small portly individuals, fit to grace the pages of Cruickshanks. Time evidently dealt generously with them, for despite their advanced age they were fresh and hearty. The little lady wore an old-fashioned muslin cap on her head decorated with many bows of red silk and seemed a relic of a long departed age. The husband was quaintly but serviceably attired and was a great favourite with all the neighbours. The women of the district laboured as hard as the men folks in the garden, and also carried the milk to town in well poised vessels on their head.

It was one of my wonders to see how they could turn their heads from side to side, yet none of the milk ever spilt ! I knew nothing of the laws governing such forces then, and would follow them to see the curious phenomenon as it appeared to my youthful gaze.

The people never troubled with the engrossing politics of the others, the laws were good enough for them. Industry was sure to be protected as it ever has been by the laws. Idlers like the Socialists covet

other people's possessions they neither toil nor spin themselves. Village and city politicians want an easier way to live than by the sweat of their brows. Would that all the neighbours had the same level philosophy as the descendants of the Danes !

The ambition of the people, as I understood it, was to live in a slate house, not thatched, as nearly all of their houses were. They pointed out others as being successful in some things, and wound up with the avowal that they lived in a slate house as they termed it.

Intermarriage was the general rule in that district, and where some ventured to intermingle with others it proved a decided failure. I met several in the United States and found they kept up the tribal custom even there. Their weddings and burials were great displays, for on such occasions they yielded to what might be termed extravagance. Their lives were truly monotonous otherwise, they never claimed holidays and excursions were unknown in the locality.

THE FAMOUS LACE MAKERS.

LOOKING at a wonderful and chaste specimen of Irish lace, and the variety of figures, flowers, and devices on it, I could not realise that it was made by uneducated minds and very often by poor delicate women who received a mere pittance out of its sale.

Most of the lace makers lived in the old and shabby quarter of the town, and were generally old spinsters who lived in one little room and had their frame erected in the same apartment.

I knew one delicate old lady named Peggy whose eyes used to glisten when she related that she was one

of four lace makers who made the lace train for the wedding gown of Queen Victoria. She was then eighty years of age, and had never used glasses at her fine work, so trying to ordinary eyes. She was a most retiring and peaceful soul, and never troubled anyone until compelled by lack of work. Although so advanced in years she was happy when she could get orders for some of the matchless lace that she could still make.

It was truly wonderful to see the artistic work of this aged and obscure poor worker. When asked how she contrived to produce such, her old face used to beam at the thought that it was considered good.

The Art, so to speak, would have died out if a neighbouring lady of a good county family had not opened a school for girls to be trained in the last of the old industries for which the place had long been remarkable. I learned that many young women are now at the business, but I am sure that though they have modern appliances at their work, and healthy workrooms, that they will not excel the finely executed and chaste work that the old workers did in their tenements and at almost a starvation wage. It is a most consoling thing to know that they cannot be exploited like the old lace makers by jobbers who bought their work for very little and sold it at a magnificent profit.

THE VILLAGE CONFECTIONER.

AN old lady in one of the streets had a little huckster's shop consisting principally of eatables for children. It was like a doll's house, so orderly and tidy were its surroundings. She had a systematic turn of mind, and arrayed all the newest brands of sweets and con-



THE VILLAGE CONFECTIONER.

fectionery cupola-shaped in the place likely to attract her young customers. She was stingy to a fault, but the quality of her goods and her flattering tongue conquered the tastes of her patrons, and she plied a successful trade. Her fund of energy was not wholly engrossed in the shop, but leaned also towards the management of the neighbouring church. She knew everyone, and could quote pedigrees and withal be very serviceable to the pastor, who was not a practical man. She employed her shrewdness in making herself quite indispensable in such arrangements, and could buy things at almost cost price. She domineered over the ladies of the Guilds, and generally kept troublesome church frequenters and critics in order. Some thought her the lady bountiful of the parish, but she managed never to expend any of her own money. Making collections and putting herself at the head of every religious undertaking were her special characteristics. Many of the young people disliked her arrogance, and the more advanced ones were displeased at her assumption of authority. She had the ear of the pastor, and therefore took no pains to yield to them. The usual recriminations kept on for years until a man of more practical and sensible turn of mind succeeded to the pastorate when her sun was suddenly eclipsed.

She had not always been a devotee at the church, and it was spitefully hinted that she had a past. Her manner was irritating except when she was selling her goods or likely to gain something. She would rush about with her grim face set in a sphinx like sneer, and when she met anyone whom she had vanquished in some encounter, she would glare triumphantly at them. She went on news expeditions, and very many times exposed

secrets that should never have seen the light to some of her confidentials. To know her was to be acquainted with the parish gossip, and to hear news retailed of pastor and people.

She encouraged busybodies to call at her leisure moments, and they discussed the doings of many a household.

The last time I passed by the once trim and neat little home of the village confectioner I found it only a ghost of what I knew it long ago. All the rancour of the village competitors of that day had passed away with their memory, and I could afford to be generous to the poor woman who once gave the adult population many fancied grievances but soothed the task of the young generation by sweet morsels.

THE POLLING OR ELECTION DAYS IN OUR BOROUGH.

THE Municipal or Parliamentary election occasions were gala days fit to be painted by the inimitable Hogarth.

One would have thought that the destinies of Empires hung on the result. How earnestly and eloquently the opposing canvassers worked with the rank and file of the Electorate, and how benevolent they were to the rabble with their money !

The region of the polling booth was turned into a Bedlam and a tumultuous mob could scarcely be restrained by even the bullets of the "Guardians of the law."

What exquisite satire was poured out on candidates by their opponents ? The severity of the contest was evident from the sort of voters that were brought to

the poll. The imbecile, the blind, lame and sick came forth in all manner of conveyances. Despairing candidates discovered the old trick of personation, and their supporters polled the dead and absent. The Borough held its breath so to speak until the momentous announcement of the return of the popular candidate, when a pandemonium was let loose. The triumphant politician retired to wear his laurels and forget his election promises, and the reckless audacity of his supporters who gained little by their devotion to the hero of the hour.

It is related of a certain old time election that an old pensioner who had lost both hands laid his artificial substitute on the Testament to swear and was objected to because it was not his own. This legal disputation added a delightful comedy to the occasion.

The Ballot Act has more or less revolutionised voting, in the old town and outside an odd faction fight the polling is stripped of the tragedy and humour of former days.

FOOLS AND FANCIES.

BEFORE the stringent regulations for the detention of idiots were enforced in the country, each town and hamlet had its local fool or half natural as the people called them in their tender but unpractical pity for the afflicted. If the records of the more prominent ones were published they would make as amusing reading as "The Innocents Abroad." In our town there were two at large for years, and they had full play for their crazy freaks. It was considered a serious fault to meddle with them, but of course boys did not share that feeling,

and many a prank was played on them. One was a half witted man dressed in cast off police uniform. He was usually around the Constabulary Barracks, where he managed to get his daily food by going on errands. He carried the little undress cap of the police jauntily on his head, but the coat and pants were usually too large for him, and he could never be got to wear shoes or stockings. He was met in every direction, and when the boys got the chance they shouted out "Jack the Goat," and then ran, and the idiot followed until they cornered him. When he was nearly overpowered he usually turned and kicked like a jackass. This was a very familiar sight, yet Jack got many pennies from his persecutors. He spent a life-time at this kind of life. Happily for him the strict regime had not been ushered in. Cracked Judy was another important but grotesque figure in the principal street, and the terror of young children who imagined her something like Briarius on account of her protruding limbs. She was badly deformed in her body, and had contortions in her ugly features. I often remember children drawing their mothers' garments over them as she approached for a penny. She was to my mind a nightmare, and if I happened to be passing when someone irritated her my heart used to beat violently with dread as she made a sweep with her shawl in her distorted arms that magnified themselves phantasmally in my eyes. She was accustomed to sing a snatch of a political song when in good humour, and it was awful to behold the workings of her face at the moment. Otherwise she was harmless, and the country people for miles around were generous to her on market days and looked on her as a feature of our town just as the monument on the bridge spanning the river.



THE PARISH IDIOT.

Miss Anne, another eccentric character, was for many years a well-known figure also. She was of a superior type, and her little silly fancy led her to believe that she had some claim on the Bishop and she was called the Bishop's lady in ridicule. She was then an elderly spinster dressed in old faded silk clothes that had seen better days. She carried her tattered train quite daintily as if she was a belle of fashion. Outside her one strange fancy she was a most inoffensive elderly creature. The Bishop of the day was a noble specimen of a gentleman, and quite considerate in every respect, unlike his acrimonious successor. Miss Anne haunted the precincts of the Cathedral, and would pretend to be very busy looking for His Lordship to whom she never had been introduced. When he was not there, she went away evidently annoyed, and if he was present, she stood idly by looking well pleased as he passed out to his carriage. On one occasion she played a clever ruse on the coachman who was outside the Cathedral waiting for the Bishop. About the end of the service Miss Anne managed to come out of the shrubbery near the vestry where she was evidently hiding, and entered the carriage. The coachman thought it was his Lordship as she tapped on the window the given signal to start. He drove quickly away to the Episcopal residence outside the city, and on opening the door to let His Lordship out he found Miss Anne lying back in state evidently enjoying the carriage ride. She put out her hands to be helped out, and what the coachman said to her does not bear repetition. He pulled her out, and drove at full speed back when he met the Bishop who was much amused at the affair, and hoped Miss Anne did not receive harsh treatment at the hands of the angry man.

One of the leading shopkeepers in our town was credited as a very level-headed man of business, and shrewd in every affair of life, but his one weakness was love for the aristocratic class, although he posed as a Nationalist. A swindler came the way and wormed himself into the good graces of our plebian and posed as a French Count. The result was that the foolish father gave his virtuous daughter to the impostor as his wife. Thus was the future of the girl ruined, but that did not wean the father from the silly pretensions of apeing after his supposed betters. This otherwise sober-minded citizen was the laughing-stock of all his acquaintances for this ridiculous folly.

There was a philanthropic doctor known to generations of our townspeople. He had retired on a competence years longer than most citizens could remember. He freely gave his time to all cases of want and shame, not that he ever gave money, but he did valiant service otherwise. He lived in the more fashionable residential part of the town, and it was not an unusual sight to see crowds of poor women, neglected looking children, and unkempt looking men waiting at his hall door to interview him. A stranger would have taken the place for an Institution of some kind or the abode of one who had a fortune to give away. The Doctor was then an aged and loquacious man and was wont to come out suddenly and hustle several men, women, and children before him when he would walk several streets talking gesticulating to the poor applicants and sometimes he would suddenly tell the retinue to return to his house again or escort them back. He was on all Charitable Boards, and would procure tickets for food for distressed people, and get some employment, and to his

credit look after young girls in moral danger. He sent many boys into the Army or to Industrial Schools, and in that way was a very serviceable citizen. His weakness was to make a great fuss and have a crowd of petitioners around his place and appear overwhelmed at their importunity. At other times he would rush out suddenly bareheaded, and ask the first person passing to call the police as he could not stand all those persons. On another occasion he would drop them a few pennies, and tell them that they were robbing him. It was truly an amusing spectacle independent of the sad side of the poor applicants paraded before the public with little material advantages to themselves.

IN OUR STREET.

THE quaintness of the town seemed to fashion its citizens, and among the celebrities was the unique character known as the "letter writer." This functionary, although young in years, retired from a more laborious occupation to win honours in a less scurrying existence.

He was singularly content with life, and his natural desires for comedy were abundantly supplied by his visit to the idlers who turned out politicians and daily relieved the dulness of the place by exciting discussions on imperial and civic subjects.

The auditors of those village statesmen were in the state of wonderment described by Oliver Goldsmith when the villagers of Lissoy heard the village schoolmaster.

A copy of the local penny weekly newspaper did generous service in this civic debating club. Our friend,

by reason of his profession, was made the exponent of the collective opinion of the body, and when the local representatives in Parliament received missives of encouragement or restraint from his facile pen, they paid due deference as if they came from the local publicans or Poor Law Guardians.

This scribe was a man of importance in our midst, and as he went through the town he gave and received tokens of familiarity and respect. He kept abreast of the times, and by scanning the local journal knew of births, deaths, marriages, and other joys and sorrows. Old Mary the Huckster who sold everything from a needle to an anchor would be gracefully saluted. It was expedient by all means to keep such an ally on one's side. The whole neighbourhood frequented her emporium for she had everything in stock to suit their humble wants. She sold bulls eyes, peppermint, hot lozenges, gingerbread, plain and cottage loaves, rolls of fat and lean bacon, snuff of many brands, clay pipes, and hard plug tobacco, dates, salt and condiments, tallow, and pins and needles, cheap pottery for bedroom and table use, and jam tarts galore, the envy of the children of the street ; pigs feet and brushes, flour and tin cans, scour for sheep, and plasters for weak backs, all were in indiscriminate and graceful confusion, quite a triumph of kaleidoscopic art. She marked the shillings owed to her in large strokes, and the pennies in other hieroglyphics, and it was never known where this illiterate shopkeeper charged too much or too little at the reckoning day when the credit customers paid.

He sometimes met another prim looking little lady, and as she has somewhat of a cynical smile he thought it was a safe plan to cultivate her graces.

When he desired to propitiate any of the neighbours he presented them with a medal or little religious picture of which he seemed to have an inexhaustible stock. How he came by such peace offerings we never could make out, as he never had any money at his command except he received a moiety from a rural pastor whose sermons he praised and thereby touched his pocket book through the very human weakness of vanity.

The little pert lady instantly surrendered to the wiles of William when she saw a picture of her favourite, and began talking of their mutual clerical friend, and the series of devotions announced to begin at such a church, etc. The ice was broken, and our diplomat received a hearty welcome to visit her little home in the old part of the town, a relic of its former importance. She was a local baker's wife, and her poor man was the wage earner though a nonentity. He was content to be in the same category that I noticed in a French Canadian town where a hotel keeper had a sign over his door advertising himself as the husband of Madam So and So. All his glory radiated from his better half, and so with the local baker's wife in our old fashioned bailiwick. We have attended an "At Home" with her so for the present dismiss her as she bade a cordial adieu to our village celebrity. We were fortunate to have a garrison in town, and for something better to do the soldiers were out route marching, and as our friend William had time on his hands he bristled up when he heard the martial music coming down the leading street. In Irish towns the idlers and ne'er-do-wells always were found as motley followers of the local detachment of soldiers. They kept the step with the military, and bore the fatigue of the self-imposed march like the rank and file,

and were bantered by the soldiers to join and see what fine life it was. Many became soldiers, and after all the shrieks of politicians, were not Irish troopers found in solid numbers in all the wars of England from the Peninsular battle fields down to the Boer struggle ? Perhaps it was not for love, but then it is not our purpose to state the reason here. William waited at the corner, and took up the step with the other boys whose blood ran riot with Celtic impulse when the sound of the rolling drum and sonorous fife accompanied them. He had in his giddy and young days spent a few training periods at the Militia Barracks, which was a positive God send to many wild youth in the town. They actually were sent to the Curragh of Kildare to practice ball firing on a few occasions. Some of them have never been outside a radius of five miles from their natal spot before or ever since. Great events were reckoned by that momentous journey in after years, just as the old people of past generations were accustomed to count their age from the night of the big wind. Our friend did not long remain marching to the tune of Garryowen owing to the rapid fire of unpleasant comments bandied about by his thoughtless townsmen. He dropped out as he came near one of the local churches situated near a famous locality in the ancient story of the old town, but now grass grown, and fit subject for an antiquarian temper. The ivy-mantled relic of the Castle remains to dominate the ancient surroundings, and the noble river flows sluggishly by to complete the picture of the unregarded glories of the past. He knew all the history on his fingers' ends, and revelled in its quiet gloom. The sexton of the near-by dilapidated church was a friend of his and this potentate was a character in himself

greater than the village Beadle depicted in Oliver Twist. He was as great a man as the parish pastor, and this is making much of him when we recollect the spiritual and temporal sway of the Soggarth in an Irish parish. Of course there was no proportion between them in the spiritual sense as no Bishop ever laid hands on the clerk, but he cut a great figure when he chose, and the pastor himself quailed before his temper when the sexton took an undue supply of porter. He was there for a series of years, and appeared to the old woman as an honorary Archdeacon that no pastor could muster up the courage to dismiss him. He had his following too in the parish for he advocated resorting to arms against the Government. Anyone who took that stand was sure to be popular, and the drop of drink did not matter. Some old cronies were heard to say that it was a weak heart that caused him to frequent the neighbouring public house. When he stood at the church gate flushed and proud, the children were mute going into the House of Prayer. His roar at them was worse than to set one of old Mack's bullocks after them. It was to such a personage then that the scribe made his second call, and though he was an important man in his own sphere, still he paid great deference to Tom. The Clerk was in a jovial and reckless mood at the time and was pleased to see his old confrere whose weakness for Diocesan news he well knew of old. In fact, it was a part of his plan of campaign to find out the little soft spots in the venerable clergy and then act accordingly. Some were ardent patriots and he took care to send them now and again pamphlets, cuttings of newspapers and books on their heroes and pet policy, on others he rubbed in the blarney when he knew their vulnerable point was their superiority as

singers or preachers. The bookworms and lovers of sports had their superior views very timely brought forth to their own and their parishioners' satisfaction, but not in vain. One noticed that he required a new coat, or that his shoes were not so good or a more kindly nature observed that he was not looking so well, and required a little nourishment, and so our friend was wise in his own generation and his visit to the medium of such gossip was not a waste of time. Then there were the Misses De Lacey living around the corner. They were angular and frigid looking individuals whom some old friends said looked like Maypoles. They had a cosy little home, and in cold weather presented such a domestic picture of comfort that Miss Mitford would have loved to depict the scene with each in her own place at the fire, and Minnie the cat lying contentedly purring on the mat before it.

Their ruling weakness was that some fortune hunters were after them to get them in marriage. William was in the same sodality at church, and they looked on him as a spiritual brother above such mundane aspirations. He had an entry into their home and knew how to placate the domestic quarrels that happened daily over the supposed machinations of a thoughtless young fellow who inadvertently looked at their windows as he passed, and who would be amused and astonished at the queer whimsicalities of the old maids if he became aware of their cogitations. William managed sometimes to get a little money from the sisters Venus for some favourite project that had himself as the beneficiary. They grew in imbecility with their years, and we remember the fun occasioned by one of them continually insisting in having an open umbrella over her as she lay in bed.

On a recent visit I found few of the contemporaries who remembered the austere and ancient gentlewomen. Therefore I pay homage to the names of the old maids.

A very serious and respectable widower, with three grown-up children lived next door to them, and he was believed by the trembling maidens to have the design of cutting a cellar under their house to rob and murder them. They told this as a secret to a great many people and anyone who disputed the fact was put down as an accomplice. Their hallucinations accused him of other absurd things, but with true Christian forbearance he ignored their talk, and so it held on for years. Their friend was now getting somewhat tired, and needing some refreshment, and as he did not drink intoxicants, he was in the habit of calling on one out of the list of houses that he had on his periodic visits. He timed it so that dinner was not long over. The tired housewife was weary after the bustle of the meal, and was glad to have a spare moment to rest and gossip. Most likely she had not seen her friends for a time or heard of some item of news, and required that her curiosity should be stimulated ; here then was the welcome guest.

He catered to her wishes, and she prepared a little meal for him, meanwhile indulging her love of news. A stray neighbour dropped in, and the conversation became general, so the letter writer took his departure. If the day was fine he strolled for a little in the public park, and met some acquaintances who were anxious to know how things were going apace in the Commons or at the Municipal Buildings where the Town Councillors had warm proceedings on the night before over giving a national name to a side street that had not been swept for a long time. The law makers did not mind its

similarity to a street in Constantinople, but to think that it was called after such a man was beyond endurance! If the noble personage of former days could return he would be the first to press for the change and would feel disgraced to have such a street known by his name or title. Its cleanliness depended on the weather, and it was reckless independence sometimes to traverse it. It was mooted in the Park circles that one of the local bands would serenade the streets towards midnight in honour of the great and signal victory won by a local public house owner who was elected Mayor, and who had not long been a citizen. His opponent belonged to an ancient and respectable family that lived in the town for generations, but that was not a qualification then for Municipal or Parliamentary honours. A free supply of beer was to be given out to make the victory noticeable, and the revelry lasted until morning. The successful candidate had a casket of whiskey on his counter as a trade mark, on which was printed in golden letters "The life of man," but we well remember how it proved to be "The death of man in his case."

It was time for the gentleman of leisure to proceed homewards, as it was coming to the hour of his principal meal, and his mother was there by that time after her long day's work. After the repast he set out for the Temperance Room, where he held disputations and played some minor games until closing hour at 11 p.m. This programme was varied but slightly every day for the series of years that we knew him. If he did not serve his generation by solid work and discharging the duties of his state he did it perhaps as letter writer for the illiterate, and a general confidant for weak minds

that required someone to lean on. He was a retailer of pious souvenirs to disarm criticism, and a purveyor of harmless gossip, and a flatterer of susceptible and shallow personalities who gleaned comfort out of the praise accorded.

We could not pass him in our civic life without libating so much lustral ink to his regretted memory.

THE TOWN FAIR.

OUR quarterly or monthly fairs could truthfully be styled the Farmers' Parliament, for there were seen every grade of agriculturist from the successful genius to the most unprogressive one. What a transformation the fair worked in the town, which was usually so quiet as far as traffic was concerned ?

On the morning of the fair, as early as the first streak of dawn was seen over the horizon, a rumble of market carts began. The air was full of strange sounds rising from the multitude, and in a short time this was intermingled with the lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep and grunting of pigs. The streets were thronged with people, and the public houses did a rare business that made the "Fair" deservedly popular with the owners. Booths or tents were erected where pigs' feet, ginger bread, lemonade and rude confectionery tempted the farmers, labourers, and drivers to satisfy their hearty appetites. It was a matter of astonishment to see the quantity of hairy bacon and coarse bread that they consumed after having regaled their thirst at the sign of the "Fox and Hounds."

If the Fair was successful, and the prices good, the rustics were in great glee, and indulged in throwing

weapons at so much each at bottles set up in a ring. Their sons and dependents slouched about and saw the sights of the town whilst their elders adjourned to the public-house, discussing politics or manures, artificial and natural. The old fidelity that once bound the labourer to the agriculturist does not survive in the younger class of hired man, so that the labourer had a pleasurable sensation in his own independence in adjourning to his selected resort, where speeches were made against farmers and landlords and in support of the new Communism.

The old time farmer came to the Fair in a creel or cart with his beast, and crouched in this same rude conveyance were one or more of his children and his spouse, but now dog-carts and gigs carry the family to the market, followed by the cattle, etc., in ample farm carts. Still the new type of agriculturist can hardly be called empressé and superior in social conduct to the old-fashioned farmers.

The new school no longer cry out against the scientific farmer, but the kindly old habits are dying out before the hard and fast money system, and an exaggerated idea of the city and its amusements. The result is that the comparative refinement of the town is robbing the land of its peasantry, and transferring them into denizens of slums. In the old Burgh the country gave its undue proportion to the ranks of the unemployed, who regarded with a sort of complacent fatalism any work that would be going on. Such was the primitive market, a fit subject for some artist of light and shade.

THE LABOUR LEADER.

TRADES UNIONISM was not the factor it is elsewhere in the town. When the first strike occurred it gave courage to the workers to band themselves together for mutual protection to secure a living wage.

It was a novel sight, especially to the young and ardent, when the workers turned out from their employment and made a show of rejoicing at the conflict, but deep down in the hearts of the strikers there was a haunting dread that the masters might prove more than a match for them.

The religious and nationalist leaders with selfish discretion avoided participation in the matter, and preserved neutrality between master and man, and so the toilers had to select their own leaders. The dumb endurance of the strikers and their families on reduced rations, and their self control, were appealing traits of the struggle, and finally the clarion voice of the reformer won ample concessions, and thus ended the conflict. The result placed the workers on independent lines, and fair remuneration ever since.

The occasion produced a leader in the person of one of the factory clerks, who had been educating himself on social questions, and ambitioned a change from the grinding routine of his life with its meagre pay. Now was the golden opportunity to show his comrades his store of arguments, and his capacity for guiding them to victory. He was a marked man destined to feel the retribution of the local Junta of employers if the strike failed. He harangued his fellows, and insisted that master and man were one in their interdependence

upon each other. He quoted the artificial importance into which Capital as Capital had grown as compared with indispensable labour. Bank notes, stocks, shares, and money in any conceivable form could do absolutely nothing until labour came along with its magic will and strength of body. The old world place with its narrow conservatism of thought was simply hurried along by the doctrine of equality of rights, and the young demagogue fairly cast aside the traditional leaders of the toilers. Well it would have been for the successful Ajax if he had rested on the laurels that he had won, but an idea of his own greatness took possession of him.

Obstinacy to his employers and self-asserted superiority over his fellows operated against him. He removed to a larger sphere of action, and there dominated his circle until his arrogance alienated his followers. He received another chance in a prominent City, but there again his old weakness followed him, with the result that he came back in humiliation to the old place, and is now a nonentity in the ranks that once he raised from serfdom. The cause has still a curious fascination for him, a yearning deeply muffled up in pride and resentment.

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